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# Polish Legions 1914–19

Nigel Thomas PhD • Illustrated by Johnny Shumate

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Nigel Thomas PhD • Illustrated by Johnny Shumate
Series editor Martin Windrow

In grateful memory of Jan K. Domański

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**Abbreviations used in text & battle-order tables**

| | |
|---|---|
| Admin | administration |
| Armd | armoured |
| Arty | artillery |
| Bde | brigade |
| Bn | battalion |
| BrigGen | Brigadier General |
| Bty | battery |
| Cav | cavalry |
| Co | company |
| Col | column |
| Div | division |
| Eng | engineer |
| Gen | General |
| Inf | infantry |
| Lt | Light |
| LtGen | Lieutenant General |
| MajGen | Major General |
| Med | medical |
| Mtd | mounted |
| Ptn | platoon |
| Recce | reconnaissance |
| Regt | regiment |
| Res | reserve |
| Sigs | signals |
| Sqn | squadron |
| Tech | technical |

**Acronyms used in text**

| | |
|---|---|
| AH | Austro-Hungarian |
| AOK | German field army |
| BT | Territorial Battalion |
| CO | commanding officer |
| C-in-C | commander-in-chief |
| DB | Bartoszów Sections |
| DOW | Military District |
| GHQ | General Headquarters |
| GOC | General Officer Commanding |
| GP | Greater Poland |
| kk | Imperial Royal |
| kuk | Imperial and Royal |
| NCO | non-commissioned officer |
| PDS | Polish Rifle Sections |
| PDSok | *Sokol* Field Sections |
| PKP | Polish Auxiliary Corps |
| POW | Polish Military Organization |
| PPS | Polish Socialist Party |
| PSZ | Polish Armed Forces |
| TS | Riflemen's Society |
| ZS | Riflemen's Association |
| ZWC | Union of Active Resistance |

# POLISH LEGIONS 1914–1919

# INTRODUCTION

Poland dominated east-central Europe from 1569 to 1795 as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, comprising 315,000 square miles of present-day Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus and western Ukraine.

From 1648 the Commonwealth fell into decline as Austria, Prussia and Russia periodically annexed its territories, culminating in the Partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795, and the abolition of the Commonwealth on 24 Oct 1795. The 49,800-square-mile Austrian Partition comprised Galicia and West or 'New' Galicia (also called 'Lesser Poland'). The Prussian Partition, with 54,600 square miles, consisted of Royal Prussia (renamed West Prussia), Greater Poland (named South Prussia, and from 3 Apr 1848 Posen Province) and South ('New') East Prussia. The predominant Russian Partition, with an area of 178,900 square miles, contained 63 per cent of Commonwealth territory and included southern Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus and western Ukraine. Directly absorbed into Russia as the 'Western Land', it comprised 9 provinces (governorates): Courland, Lithuania (later Grodno), Kiev, Minsk, Mogilev, Podolia, Vilnius, Vitebsk and Volhynia.

Napoleon encouraged Polish nationalist ambitions by forming the 60,000-square-mile Grand Duchy of Warsaw (9 June 1807), from South and New East Prussia, adding West Galicia in 1809. Following Napoleon's defeat the Congress of Vienna retained Poland from 9 June 1815 as the 49,000-square-mile Kingdom of Poland (also called 'Congress Poland'), with western South Poland annexed by Prussia as the Grand Duchy of Posen. Congress Poland was an autonomous region of Russia with the Russian Tsar as king. The unsuccessful Nov 1830 and Jan 1863 military uprisings in Congress Poland led to the state's absorption into Russia as 'Vistulaland', although 'Congress Poland' remained the commonest designation. (From 1912 it comprised 10 governorates: Chełm, Kalisz, Kielce, Łomża, Lublin, Piotrków, Płock, Radom, Suwałki and Warsaw, all except Chełm and Suwałki having Polish-majority populations.) Rebellions in 1846 in Galicia and Kraków against the Austrians, and in Greater Poland against the Prussians, also failed.

A member of the distinguished Ostoja family, *Rotmistrz* Juliusz Ostoja-Zagórski, commanding the 2nd Lancer Regt, II Bde of the Polish Legions in Austro-Hungarian service, Dec 1915. The captain wears the M1915 field-green *rogatywka* cap with M1914 eagle cockade and a silver Polish eagle badge on the left side. His lambskin-lined pike-grey Austro-Hungarian *Pelzulanka* over-jacket is secured by cords; under it, note the Austrian 10-button service tunic, with collar rank stars in the Austrian triangular arrangement. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

# Poland in the Great War

During World War I, Congress Poland and Galicia were the arenas for most of the important battles on the Eastern Front from Aug 1914 to Sept 1915. Uniquely among the belligerent peoples, Poles fought for the Allies in the Russian and French armies and for the Central Powers in the Austro-Hungarian and German forces.

Between 13 Aug and 13 Dec 1914, major groups of Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German armies fought see-sawing campaigns in Congress Poland and Galicia. By the turn of the year German armies were halted before Warsaw, and AH forces were stalemated in Galicia. The Central Powers' Gorlice-Tarnow Offensive, from 2 May 1915, proved decisive: German and AH armies drove the Russians out of Galicia and eastern Poland, and in the north, German forces took Warsaw on 5 Aug and advanced to a line in western Russia by 30 Sept 1915. Apart from the brief Russian occupation of

eastern Galicia during the Brusilov Offensive (June-Sept 1916), Poland and Galicia thereafter remained behind the Central Powers' front lines until Nov 1918.

Congress Poland was reorganized by the Central Powers. German Eastern Command annexed north-east and east Poland, while the remaining territory was divided from 1 Sept 1915 into military administrations called 'governments-general'. Northern and south-west Poland became the German Government-General Warsaw, while southern Poland was the AH Government-General Kielce (later Lublin).

To secure Polish support, the German and Austro-Hungarian emperors proclaimed on 5 Nov 1916 the unification of these governments-general as a 'Kingdom of Poland' (with an as-yet unelected king) under German control. On 14 Jan 1917 a Provisional Council of State was established as an interim government. Meanwhile, in Russia the Revolution of 8–12 March (Old Style, 23–27 Feb) forced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate; a Russian Provisional Government took power, and on 30 March granted Poland – still under Central Powers occupation – its independence. Accordingly, the Polish Provisional Council formed the Polish Armed Forces (*Polski Sily Zbrojne*, PSZ). Moreover, the entry of the United States into the war on 6 Apr 1917 convinced Józef Piłsudski, Poland's strongman, that his country's future lay with the Western Allies. When the PSZ refused to swear allegiance to Kaiser Wilhelm II on 9 July 1917 most troops were interned, and on 22 July Piłsudski was imprisoned.

The founder of modern Poland, Józef Piłsudski (seated), with his aide-de-camp *Porucznik* Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszowski, in Sept 1916. Col Wieniawa-Długoszowski would be promoted *generał dywizji* in 1938, and nominated President of Poland on 17 Sept 1939 – the day the Soviet Union invaded Poland, causing him to emigrate to Paris after one day in office. Wieniawa-Długoszowski wears the M1916 Polish Auxiliary Corps lancers' ceremonial uniform with standard shoulder straps and double silver wire *wężyk* zigzag braid on his collar; note also the ADC's silver wire aiguillettes. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

The Provisional Council of State was succeeded by a Temporary Committee on 25 Aug 1917, then on 15 Oct by a 3-man Regency Council, with Piłsudski as Minister of War *in absentia*. Political stalemate continued until 8 Nov 1918, when the Germans released Piłsudski and sent him to Warsaw, where, on 11 Nov, he proclaimed the Second Polish Republic, with himself as commander-in-chief of the PSZ. German and AH occupation forces left Poland on 13 Nov, and the following day the Regency Council resigned in favour of Piłsudski, who was appointed Provisional Head of State on 22 Nov 1918. Poland's epic struggle to regain independence had been achieved, after 123 years.

# POLISH FORCES IN THE AUSTRIAN PARTITION

## Austro-Hungarian Army

Galicia was located in the Austrian 'Imperial half' of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. An estimated 55–60,000 Poles served in the 'Imperial and Royal Common Army', mostly in the 6 infantry divisions recruited from 3 of the 16 peacetime corps areas. Common Army regiments were usually composed of 2 or 3 nationalities, and Poles usually served with Ukrainians (officially, 'Ruthenes'), Czechs or Germans.

In all, 55 regts – 23 Infantry, 12 Rifles, 3 Mountain Rifles, 9 Militia (*kk Landsturm*), 3 Lancer and 5 Dragoon, plus 4 Light Inf Bns – were partly or wholly Polish. All 13 divs in which they served fought against Russia from Aug 1914 until 1916, thereafter either remaining on the Eastern Front or transferring to the Bosnian, Italian, Romanian or Salonika fronts.

## Polish Rifle and Sports Clubs, 23 June 1910–27 Aug 1914

Józef Piłsudski, since Nov 1892 a leading member of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), formed in Apr 1904 the PPS Battle Organization (*Organizacja Bojowa*), which carried out armed attacks in Congress Poland with 6,500 fighters, until disbandment in July 1910. In June 1908 Piłsudski also formed the clandestine all-party Union of Active Resistance (*Związek Walki Czynnej*, ZWC) in Lwow (now Lviv, Ukraine), and began planning an independent Polish army allied to Germany and Austro-Hungary against Russia – a policy supported by the AH authorities. It was disbanded in Aug 1914.

In 1909 the Austrian War Ministry had permitted its Polish minority to form rifle clubs on the German-Austrian and Czech model. Piłsudski and other Polish political organizers seized the opportunity to form the cadre for an independent Polish army. Seven clubs were formed, with legal branches in Galicia and secret branches in Congress Poland and Germany.

The most important club was the **Riflemen's Association** (*Związek Strzelecki*, ZS), formed on 23 June 1910 by Piłsudki's ZWC in Lviv. In 1912 it absorbed the **Riflemen's Society** (*Towarzystwo Strzelecki*, TS), formed 1 Dec 1910 in Kraków, and on 21 June 1914 the 2,000-strong **Mountain Association Sections** (*Związek Drużyny Podhalańskich*), established in May 1913 by the Polish National Democratic Party. The ZS was divided into 3 'legal' commands – W. Galicia (HQ Kraków), Central Galicia (Rzeszów), E. Galicia (Lviv); and 2 'illegal'– Congress Poland, and Foreign Command (Germany). When the ZS disbanded on 3 Aug 1914 it had trained 6,449 riflemen for the Polish Legions.

Mieczysław Ryś-Trojanowski leads a Riflemen's Association group on a route march near Zakopane, southern Poland, in 1913. They wear M1913 Rifle uniforms with *Maciejówka* caps without badges. Ryś-Trojanowski later served in the Legions, commanding 5th Regt from Nov 1916. He and his deputy (who is grinning, and carrying a joke wooden sword) are wearing the M1913 subaltern officers' rank insignia later adopted by the Polish Legions' I Bde; two men behind them display ZS collar-patch rank insignia. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

From Apr 1913 ZS members could buy a **'rifle uniform'** in the same greyish-blue cloth introduced into the AH Army on 7 Oct 1908 as 'pike-grey' (*hechtgrau*). The M1913 rifle uniform comprised the 19th-century Polish workers' *Maciejówka* peaked (visored) cap with a uniform-colour piping or welt around the centre of the band, brown or black leather or uniform-colour cloth chinstrap and peak; a silver M1913 badge depicted an uncrowned eagle perched on an 'Amazon' *pelta* shield, with the letter 'S' (*strzelec*, rifleman)

on a small superimposed ‘Swiss’ shield. The tunic had a turnover collar, shoulder straps (enlisted ranks only), plain cuffs with a brown bone button; 5 front buttons, or a fly front; external breast pockets and internal waist pockets with squared buttoned flaps. Officers wore breeches and brown riding boots, and enlisted ranks trousers, puttees and brown ankle boots. Insignia of rank and function comprised coloured whistle-lanyards, and vertical bars on rectangular collar patches: officers, silver bars on red; NCOs, white on dark blue; privates, blue on white. From 1913 field-grade officers had gold 6-point stars and traditional *wężyk* zigzag silver collar braid, and subaltern officers’ dark-red zigzag braid.

The **Polish Military Association** (*Polski Związek Wojskowy*) was formed illegally in 1908 for military training; on 4 Oct 1910 it was redesignated ‘Polish Army’ (*Armia Polska*). In June 1911 the *Zarzewie* (‘Embers’) youth organization reorganized it in Lviv as the legalized **Polish Rifle Sections** (*Polskie Drużyny Strzeleckie,* PDS). By Aug 1914 there were 6,000 members, including 127 x 8-man rifle squads grouped into platoons, companies and regiments in I & II Districts. Personnel wore a grey-green uniform introduced 15 Apr 1912, comprising a *Maciejówka* with a grey-green oval badge introduced 1 Oct 1913; a tunic with a turnover collar, shoulder straps, cuffs with buttoned flaps, 5 front buttons, and rectangular external breast and waist pockets with squared buttoned flaps; trousers, puttees and brown ankle boots. The pike-grey AH M1914 uniform was introduced from 15 June 1914. Insignia introduced from 15 Feb 1912 included whistle-lanyards, and vertical rank bars on rectangular collar patches: field officers, gold on dark green; subaltern officers, white on dark red; NCOs, white on dark green, and dark green on white.

Piłsudski (ninth from left) and his staff during the 1st Cadre Company's brief occupation of Kielce in Aug 1914, its failure mirrored in their dejected faces. All are wearing M1913 pike-grey Rifle uniforms with *Maciejówka* caps bearing silver uncrowned Polish eagle-and-shield badges; they are armed with Austro-Hungarian M1904 cavalry sabres with silver fist-knots, and various pistols. At this date none is wearing collar rank insignia. The double-breasted lancer tunic (sixth from right) suggests a former member of the Bartoszów Sections. (Tchakov Collection)

The *Rzeczpolita* ('Republic') youth organization formed the **Bartoszów Sections** (*Drużyny Bartoszowe,* DB) in 1912 in Lviv. By 1914 they numbered 7,000-plus men in 286 sections, wearing a pike-grey, square-crowned *Bartoszówka* cap (similar to the *rogatywka)* with a DB badge comprising a cockade with a silver eagle on a dark-red disc edged silver, and a double-breasted lancer tunic. In July 1914 the DB merged with the **Sokol Field Sections** (*Polowe Drużyny Sokole,* PDSok), formed in 1912 by the *Sokol* ('Falcon') sports society, with 7,000 men and 159 sections. They wore a greenish-brown (from 1913, green-grey; from 1914, pike-grey) Rifle uniform with a wide-brimmed hat bearing a silver oval badge incorporating an eagle over crossed rifles. The Mounted Section wore the M1815 Congress Poland shako and a 10-button Austro-Hungarian lancer tunic with, 'swallow-tailed', pocket flaps. The patriotic **Tadeusz Kościusko Society** also formed sections (*Drużyny Towarzystwa im. Tadeusza Kościuszki*).

In Aug 1914 Piłsudski transferred most ZS and PDS to the Polish Legions, reforming the 200-strong remainder as the clandestine 'Polish Military Organization' (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa,* POW). This was to be the intelligence-gathering and covert operations arm of the Polish Legions in Congress Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. In Oct 1918 the now 30,000-strong POW began operating openly, disarming and repatriating German forces and claiming Lithuania, Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland for the new Polish Republic. It disbanded in Dec 1918.

*Hauptmann* Włodzimierz Ostoja-Zagórski, chief-of-staff (deputy commander) of the Polish Legions 20 Aug 1914–30 Apr 1916. Another member of the aristocratic Ostoja dynasty, this officer was a controversial figure, whose deep loyalty to AH Emperor Franz-Joseph prompted distrust by Piłsudski and his generals despite Ostoja-Zagórski's service in the Polish forces until March 1923. Here he wears the M1908 pike-grey officers' service uniform with a silver Polish eagle badge on the left side of his kepi, and displays the Austrian Imperial Order of the Iron Crown and the German M1914 Iron Cross 2nd Class buttonhole ribbon. Note the very deeply scalloped ('swallow-tailed') pocket flaps typical of AH uniforms. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

# 1st Cadre Company and Battalion, 3–23 Aug 1914

Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914. On 31 July Piłsudski mobilized the ZS and PDS, and on 3 Aug formed some of them into 1st Cadre Company –165 infantrymen and a 7-man cavalry patrol. The latter, under *Porucznik* Władysław Belina-Prażmowski, was recruited from the *Sokol* Mounted Section; it carried out a reconnaissance across the border into Congress Poland on 2–4 August. On 6 Aug the Cadre Co also advanced into Poland, and after capturing Miechów (9 Aug) it expanded into a Cadre Battalion. However, Piłsudki's expedition failed to provoke an anti-Russian uprising amongst the Congress Poles, and when the Cadre Bn entered Kielce on 12 Aug the Russian 14th Cav Div drove it back to Kraków. There, on 23

Aug, rifle club volunteers joined the Cadre Bn to form **1st Legion Infantry Regt** (I-V Bns), joining the 140-strong 1st Lancer Sqn formed 13 Aug; these forces recaptured Kielce on 21 August.

# Uniforms and insignia

Legion personnel wore M1913 field uniforms in Austro-Hungarian M1908 pike-grey, followed on 16 Aug 1915 by the M1915 field uniform varying from greenish-grey to greenish-brown and designated ‘field-green’ (*feldgrün*), with M1908 brown leather equipment. Initially Austrian *Landsturm* yellow-and-black armbands were issued, but the Poles, regarding themselves as front-line combat troops, refused to wear this symbol of inferior status. From 1915 metal and enamel badges were worn on the left breast to commemorate previous unit allegiances.

1st Cadre Co infantry and lancers wore the ZS’s M1913 pike-grey field uniform with *Maciejówka* cap and silver ‘rifleman’ badge; men of the Legions’ I Bde (except cavalry) wore ‘S’ (for Rifles) on this, II and III Bdes wore ‘L’ (for Legion). Until Oct 1914 most personnel wore no collar rank insignia, which had been abolished, but officers often identified themselves by wearing their white shirt collars outside their tunic collars.

# GHQ of the Legions, 16 Aug 1914–22 Feb 1918

On 16 Aug 1914, AH High Command integrated Piłsudski’s forces into the Austrian *Landsturm*, with their own General Headquarters (*Komenda*) and General Staff (*Sztab*). On 27 Aug the Western and Eastern Legions were formed. The GHQ commander (*Komendant*), 16 Aug 1914–8 Oct 1916, usually ranked as an AH *Generalmajor*. A brigade commander (*dowodca*) was usually a *pułkownik*, but Józef Piłsudski, lacking a formal military rank, was accorded the positional title of *brigadyr* of I Bde, although he styled himself *Komendant*. The staff were Polish career officers in the AH Army, whose loyalties might thus be divided. They wore AH M1908 pike-grey and M1915 field-green uniforms, sometimes with a silver metal Polish eagle on the left side of the headgear.

# Western Legion, 27 Aug–19 Dec 1914

The Western Legion (*Legion zachodni*), HQ Kraków, comprised former ZS, PDS and ZDP personnel in the 1st Legion Inf Regt (I-V, later VI Bns); 2nd Inf Regt, formed 14 Sept 1914 (I–IV Bns); 1st Cav Sqn, and a 121-strong Artillery Staff, which expanded to form 1st Arty Regiment.

The 6,000-strong 1st Inf Regt defended Kraków on the Vistula River at the battle of Nowy Korczyn (23–24 Sept) during the Russian Galician offensive, but was unable to advance (21–26 Oct) against the Russians at Anielin-Laski in Congress Poland. Meanwhile the 3rd Inf Regt had joined from the disbanded Eastern Legion (see below). On 16–19 Nov, IV and VI Bns, supported by 1st Arty Regt, halted the Russian Galician offensive at Krzywopłoty, sustaining heavy losses, and the stalemated battle of Marcinkowice (5–6 Dec) prevented a Russian occupation of Kraków. Meanwhile 1st Cav Sqn expanded (9 Nov) to 1st Cav Battalion. 2nd Inf Regt was reassigned to the Carpathian Front.

The clandestine 7-man Polish Military Organization High Command, Aug 1915, were a formidably talented group despite their apparent youth. They wear M1913 pike-grey Rifle uniforms, with the collar rank insignia introduced Nov 1914. (Back row, left to right): Aleksander Tomaszewski, Marian Zyndram-Kościałkowski, Wacław Jędrzejewicz. (Front row): Dezyderiusz Zawistowski, Konrad Libicki, Tadeusz Żuliński, Bogusław Miedziński. All are subalterns except *Sierżant* Zawistowski; all carry M1904 cavalry sabres and wear the M1914 Polish eagle cap badge except Żuliński, whose shield badge is unidentified. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Archive, photo 10306)

# I Brigade Polish Legions, 19 Dec 1914–3 Aug 1916

The *I Brygada Legionów Polskich* was formed 19 Dec 1914 in Nowy Sacz, western Galicia, with 1st Inf Regt, 5th Inf Regt (formed 18 Dec), V and VI independent Bns, 1st Cav and 2nd Arty Battalions. The brigade was immediately committed to the battle of Łowczówek (22–25 Dec 1914), holding up the Russian advance while the AH forces built fortifications. I Bde defended positions on the Nida River from March 1915, before advancing in May into Congress Poland in the Gorlice-Tarnow Offensive, with AH 12th Inf Div (mainly Poles), engaging the Russians at Pustki on 2 May. I Bde fought on the Nida (3 May), halting Russian Fourth Army at Konary (16–25 May) and defeating the Russians at Tarłow (30 June), before crossing the Vistula at Annopol (4 July) and occupying Lublin (30 July). Meanwhile the Horse Artillery Battery was formed (23 July 1915) as 3rd Bty, 1st Arty Regiment. I Bde, including 7th Inf Regt (formed 11 May 1915 from V and VI Bns) and reinforced by 4th Inf Regt (formed 8 May) defeated Russian forces at Jastków (31 July–3 Aug) and Kamionka (4–7 August).

An infantry section from I Bde, in a well-built turf trench on the Nida River line in Congress Poland, awaits a Russian attack in March 1915 with concentrated determination. They wear M1913 pike-grey Rifle uniforms with various models of *Maciejówka* cap; note the contrast between the shapes of those in the foreground (see also title page). The weapon is the standard Austro-Hungarian 8mm M1895 Steyr-Mannlicher rifle. (Author's collection)

From September 1915 to July 1916, I Bde was stationed in Volhynia (now NW Ukraine), where it was joined by III Brigade. On 6 Sept 1915, I Bde entered Kovel, where II Bde arrived in late October. For 2 months (29 Sept–

23 Nov) I and III Bdes fought as 2 tactical groups. 1st Group *(Grupa)*, with 4th and 5th Inf Regts, operated at Kołek nad Stryrem (now Kolky, Ukraine); meanwhile 2nd Group, with 1st and 7th Inf (later 6th Inf) and 1st Arty Regts, fought (23–30 Oct) at Kukle (now Kukly), Jablonka (now Yablonka), and at Kostiuchnówka (now Kostyukhnivka, Ukraine) on 10 Nov 1915. I and III Bdes were then re-formed and joined II Bde defending the Stokhid River. In Nov 1915 I Bde was reconstituted, and spent the winter building defensive positions around Karasyn and Lyshnivka.

Senior Polish Legions officers conferring at Łuck (now Lutsk, Ukraine) on the Styr River line, June 1916. *Pułkownik* Marian Januszaitis-Żegota (first left), commanding 1st Bn/2nd Legion Inf Regt, II Bde, was the youngest colonel in the Legions when promoted to that rank in Nov 1915; he wears M1913 pike-grey Rifle uniform with I Bde field officers' rank insignia. *Podpułkownik* Władysław Sikorski (second left), attached to 2nd Regt, wears the same, but *Podpułkownik* Henryk Minkiewicz, 3rd Regt commander, II Bde (back to camera) wears M1915 field-green uniform. *Pułkownik* Ferdynand Küttner, II Bde commander (third right) wears field-green with an M1915 Polish field cap and II-III Bde rank insignia. *Oberst* Wiktor Grzesicki, commanding III Bde (second right), was a Polish officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army, so wears the AH M1908 uniform. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

1st Lancer Regt was officially formed on 15 Jan 1916. All 3 brigades, totalling 5,500–7,300 men, fought desperately to defend Kostiuchnówka against Russian XXXXVI Corps (4–6 July 1916), but were ordered to retreat; costing some 2,000 casualties, this was the Legions' bloodiest battle. The 3 brigades withdrew to the Stokhid River, and then to the Cheremoshne. In their last battle the 3 brigades defended Rudka Miryńska (now Ruska Mirinskaya, Ukraine) on 3 Aug 1916, before marching to Baranowicze (now Baranovichi, Belarus) in late August.

Volhynia, 1916: Polish legionaries of II or III Bde man an 07/12 Schwarzlose heavy machine gun for anti-aircraft use, all wearing M1915 field-green uniforms with Polish field caps. The *podporucznik* (second left) and the *plutonowy* gunner wear their rank stars in a centred line on their green collar patches, a popular Polish deviation from the triangular pattern required by AH dress regulations. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Archive, photo 10255)

# Western Legion & I Bde uniforms and insignia

(**see also Table 7**)

From Oct 1914 personnel continued to wear the pike-grey M1913 Rifle uniform. I Bde (except for cavalry) wore the *Maciejówka* cap, symbolizing allegiance to Józef Piłsudski. The infantry officers' cap had a brown leather chinstrap and peak and one uniform-colour welt around the middle of the band, and on the front of the crown an M1913 Polish eagle-and-shield badge with the letter 'S'. The tunic had no shoulder straps. Plain riding breeches were worn with brown leather boots. Equipment comprised an M1908 brown leather waist belt with a holster for the 8mm M1898 Rast u. Gasser revolver or M1907 Roth-Steyr pistol on the right hip, an M1861 infantry sabre on the left, and an M1909 aluminium canteen on the left front.

Enlisted ranks wore the *Maciejówka*; a tunic with shoulder straps; pike-grey trousers and puttees, and brown leather ankle boots. Some former DB and PDSok personnel continued to wear pike-grey *Bartoszówka* caps and wide-brimmed hats respectively. In cold weather all ranks wore a double-

breasted greatcoat with 2 rows of 5 buttons, a wide turnover collar and deep turnback cuffs, lacking shoulder straps or rank insignia. AH rankers' M1908 brown leather infantry equipment comprised: a waist belt and supporting straps for 2 double ammunition pouches for the 8mm M1895 Mannlicher rifle; M1910 calfskin backpack with M1911 messtin strapped to it; M1895 bayonet and scabbard, spade, and brown canvas M1912 'breadbag' on and behind the left hip, and an M1904, M1909 or M1912 canteen worn on the left front.

II Bde infantrymen relax in a deep trench revetted with wattle during the defence of Rarańcza, Bukovina, June–Oct 1915. All are wearing M1915 field-green uniforms with M1915 *Maciejówka* or taller-crowned Polish field caps. The *kapral* (left) has 2 white bone stars of rank arranged in AH fashion on his green collar patches, while the *chorąży* (second left), a senior NCO fulfilling officer's duties, wears a silver star on medium-wide silver collar braid. White collar patches identify the seated figure (right foreground) as a medical officer. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Archive, photo 10276)

The I Bde infantry regts (numbered 1, 5 & 7) wore unique rank insignia inspired by those of the 1913 ZS. Subaltern officers wore 6-point stars above narrow amaranth (dark red) *wężyk* zigzag braid on the front of the collar; enlisted ranks wore horizontal bars. Field officers wore no collar insignia until stars and wide Russian braid were introduced in Sept 1915. By 1915,

AH M1908 pike-grey or M1915 field-green tunics with turnover collars and swallow-tailed pocket flaps were being worn, with *Maciejówka* caps.

Initially Lancers wore the *Maciejówka*, or the M1914 *Sokol* Mounted Section pike-grey M1914 shako with a square crown, bright-red regimental piping round the upper edge of the band, a bright-red and pike-grey rosette on the left of the crown, and light-brown leather chinstrap, peak, and lower edge of the band. I Lancer Bn, formed 9 Nov 1914, replaced the rosette with a large silver frontal M1913 Polish eagle-and-shield bearing the battalion number 'I'. The M1915 pike-grey shako, a copy of the M1815 model, had a wider square light-brown leather crown; amaranth piping to the crown, side-seams and upper band edge, light-brown leather lower band edging and peak; a red-and-white rosette on the left front of the crown; and a large silver Polish eagle-and-shield bearing the regimental number '1'. The double-breasted pike-grey service tunic had a turnover collar; a silver wire left shoulder cord with a knot; 2 rows of 8 silver buttons; internal slash waist pockets with swallow-tailed flaps; pointed cuffs with silver buttons; and bright-red cuff, pocket flap and front piping, with both breast-flaps worn open to reveal bright-red lining. The single-breasted field tunic had a turnover collar; 10 silver front buttons; 4 internal pockets with swallow-tailed flaps; pointed cuffs with a button; and amaranth pocket-flap, front and cuff piping.

## Table 1: Polish independent units: 3 August 1914–4 November 1918

**Polish Legions in Imperial Royal Austrian Militia (k.k. Landsturm), 3 August 1914–20 September 1916**

- **GHQ** (16.8.1914–22.2.1918): 1, 2 Lancer Regts; 1 Arty Regt.

- **1 Cadre Co** & 1 Cav Section (3.8.1914, Kraków): 1–4 Ptns, Recce & Medical sections, 1 Cav Section; Cadre Bn, 1 Cav Ptn (9.8.1914); Kielce (12–13.8.1914); 1 Cav Sqn (13.8.1914); 1 Inf Regt (23.8.1914) with I–V Bns formed (16.8.1914), Supply Co, Recce Ptn, MP Ptn, Sapper Co (23.8.1914); Kielce (22.8.1914); formed Western Legion (27.8.1914).

- **Western Legion** (27.8.1914, Kraków), 1 Inf Regt, 2 Inf Regt (4.9.1914 with I–IV Bns), 1 Cav Regt (Sqn); Arty Staff; Nowy Korcyn 16–24.9.1914); 1 Inf Regt (I–VI Bns), 1 Arty Regt (1, 2 Bns) (1.10.1914); Anielin-Laski (21–6.10.1914); 1 Cav Bn (9.11.1914, 1 Sqn); Krzywopłoty (17–18.11.1914); Marcinkowice (5–6.12.1914); formed I Bde (19.12.1914).

- **I Polish Legions Brigade** (19.12.1914, Nowy Sacz): Mtd Rifles Ptn, HQ unit, MP Section, Admin office, Supply & Medical units; 1 Inf Regt (I–II Bns), 5 Inf Regt (III–IV Bns), V, VI Bns; 1 Cav Bn, 2 Arty Bn (4, 5 Btys); Łowczówek (22–25.12.1914). Telegraph Unit, Supply & ammunition Cols, Bde Med & Veterinary offices; 1 Inf Regt (I, III Bns), 5 Inf Regt (II, IV Bns; V, 5.1915); 7 Inf Regt (11.5.1915), 2nd Tactical Group (1, 6, 7 Inf Regts; 1 Arty Regt) (29.9.– 23.11.1915). 1 Inf Regt (I–III Bns, MG Co), 5 Inf Regt (I–III Bns, MG Co), 2 Arty Bn (5, 6 Btys), 1 Sapper Co (1.2.1916); 1 Lancer Regt (5.1.1916, 1–4 Sqns). VI Bn, 3 MG units, 1 Cav Regt (Bn), 1 Sapper Co (11.5.1915); 1 Arty Bn (1, 2 Btys) (1.2.1916); Pustki Kostiuchnówka 4–6.7.1916). Reorganized Baranowicze as Polish Auxiliary Corps (20.9.1916).

- **Eastern Legion** (27.8.1914, Lviv): I–IV Bns; disbanded (21.9.1914); reorganized as 3 Inf Regt (26.9.1914).
- **Expeditionary Force** (4.9.1914, Kraków): 2 Inf Regt (I–III Bns), 3 Inf Regt (9.1914, I–IV Bns), 2, 3 Cavalry Sqns (11.8.1914), 1 Arty Bn (30.9.1914, 1–3 Btys); Máramaros County (5.10.1914); Mołotkowo (29.10.1914); Kirlibaba (18–22.1.1915); Rafajłowa (23–4.1.1915).

- **II Polish Legions Brigade** (Máramaros County, 8.5.1915): HQ Co, Mtd Rifles Ptn, 2 Tech Cos, Field and Horse Hospitals, Supply & Ammunition Cols; 2 Inf Regt (I–III Bns), 3 Inf Regt, 2 Cav Bn (1.6.1915, 2, 3 Sqns); Rarańcza (12.6.1915); Rokitna (13.6.1915); Belgów (10.1915); 2 Lancer Regt (2, 3 Bns) (8.12.1915); Kostiuchnówka (10.11.1915); 2 Arty Bn (3, 4 Btys) (1.2.1916); Combined Cavalry Bde (3.8.1916, 1, 2 Lancer Regts); Kostiuchnówka (4–6.7.1916). Rudka Miryńska (3.8.1916). Reorganized Baranowicze as Polish Auxiliary Corps (20.9.1916).

- **III Polish Legions Brigade** (8.5.1915, Piotrków Trybulanski): 4 Inf Regt (I–III Bns, 3 MG Ptns), 5 Cav Sqn (24.6.1915), Arty Bty. 6 Inf Regt (I–III Bns, MG Co, formed 27.7.1915). Jastków (31.7.1915); Kamionka (4–7.8.1915); 1st Tactical Group (4, 5 Inf Regts) (29.9.–23.11.1915). 4 Inf Regt, 6 Inf Regt, Arty Bty (23.11.1915); 3 Cav Bn (5, 6 Sqns) (8.12.1915); 3 Arty Bn (5, 6 Howitzer Btys) (1.2.1916); Kostiuchnówka (4–6.7.1916). Reorganized Baranowicze as Polish Auxiliary Corps (20.9.1916).

**Polish Auxiliary Corps, 20 September 1916–15 February 1918**
- **I Brigade** (20.9.1916): 1, 2 Inf Regt (20.9.1916–7.1917).
- **II Brigade**: 3, 6 Inf Regt (20.9.1916); 2, 3 Inf Regts, 2 Lancer Regt, 1 Lt Arty Regt (1.1918); deserted to Russian lines, Rarańcza (15.2.1918).
- **III Brigade**: 4, 5 Inf Regt (20.9.1916–9.1917).

**Polish Armed Forces, 10 April 1917–11 November 1918**
- **Infantry Brigade**: 1, 2 Inf Regt (1.5.1918), 3 Inf Regt (11.1918).

All ranks wore rectangular amaranth collar patches scalloped at the rear edge, usually with silver volunteer buttons; subaltern officers added 3-1 silver 6-point stars arranged in a central line. They displayed narrow silver shoulder cords with a silver knot, on the left shoulder only; other ranks had 2 rectangular shoulder straps with amaranth edging and 3-1 rank bars on both shoulders. The double-breasted pike-grey patrol jacket had a wide black lambskin (fleece) collar, 2 rows of 8 front buttons, and amaranth front, cuff and pocket-flap piping. The pike-grey peakless field cap was worn with the DB cockade inherited by Legion cavalry, and ear-flaps secured at the front by 2 silver buttons.

Soldiers of 4th Legion Inf Regt, III Bde, at their well-built firing-posts on the Stokhid River line, Volhynia, autumn 1915. They mainly wear M1915 field-green, but the lighter tone shows that a few retain M1913 pike-grey tunics. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

The Mtd Rifles HQ Courier Platoon wore a *Maciejówka* or a black circular-crown shako with a wide black leather crown, lower band edging and peak, and a large silver Polish eagle with the regimental number ‘1’; their lancer uniforms had blue collar patches and piping. The Horse Arty wore the *Maciejówka* and lancer uniform with black piping. The Bde HQ Military Police (*Žandarmeria polowa*) also wore lancer uniforms. Other branches wore the I Bde infantry uniform with rectangular, scalloped-edge collar patches in branch colours.

# Eastern Legion, 27 Aug–4 Sept 1914

The Eastern Legion (*Legion wschodnie*), HQ Lviv, was formed 27 Aug 1914 with 6,200 volunteers from PDS, DB and PDSok rifle clubs, in I–IV Battalions. The Russian Third Army’s advance into Galicia forced the Legion to interrupt its formation and retreat to Mszana Dolna (10–18 September). However, over 5,000 men refused to swear allegiance to the Austro-Hungarian Emperor. On 21 Sept 1914 these recruits were drafted into the AH Army and interned, and the Legion was disbanded. However, 800 men did swear the oath on 26 Sept, and were duly formed into the understrength 3rd Inf Regt and transferred to the Western Legion.

# II Brigade Polish Legions, 4 Sept 1914–3 Aug 1916

II Brigade originated on 4 Sept 1914, when 2nd and 3rd Cav Sqns (recruited from PDSok mounted sections) and the 5,394-strong 2nd Inf Regt were formed in Kraków. The 3rd Inf Regt and 1st Arty Bn joined them, and the 8,000-strong expeditionary force was transferred on 5 Oct 1914 to the Carpathian Front in NE Hungary, where it expelled the Russians from Máramaros County (now Maramures, Romania). The Poles then advanced through the Carpathians into E. Galicia, but were defeated with heavy loss at Mołotkowo (29 October). Despite this they annihilated the Russians at Kirlibaba (now Cârlibaba, Romania) on 18–22 Jan 1915, thereby opening the way to E. Galicia and Austrian Bukovina, and they successfully defended Rafajłowa (now Bystrica, Ukraine) on 23–24 Jan from a Russian night attack. 2nd Inf Regt advanced to the Bukovina/Russian border on 15–16 Apr 1915. The brigade's fine record earned it the unofficial titles of 'Iron' and 'Carpathian'.

On 8 May 1915 the Polish forces in Bukovina (now Ukraine) were officially designated II Brigade. The brigade took Rarańcza (12 June); the following day the 63-strong 2nd Cav Sqn's heroic charge at Rokitna (now Rokytne, Ukraine) broke through the Russian 101st and 102nd Inf Divs' defences, but sustained 75 per cent casualties. II Bde defended the Rarańcza area (now Ridkivtsi, Ukraine) from 15 June until 20 Oct 1915, when it joined I and III Bdes in Volhynia. II Bde fought at Belgów in late October and occupied Kostiuchnówka (10 Nov) after fierce fighting. On 8 Dec, II and III Lancer Bns joined II Bde as 2nd Lancer Regiment.

II Bde remained on the nearby Styr River line until spring 1916, fighting with I and III Bdes at Kostiuchnówka (4–6 July 1916) before withdrawing to the Stokhid and Cheremoshne rivers. On 3 Aug, II Bde fought at Rudka Miryńska (now Ukraine), with 1st and 2nd Lancer Regts forming the Combined Cavalry Brigade. Later in August II Bde joined the other formations at Baranowicze.

*Pułkownik* Stanisław Szeptycki was a career AH Army officer who transferred in June 1916 to the Polish Legions, commanding III Bde in the bloody fighting at Kostiuchnówka on 4–6 July. He is wearing the M1916 Polish Auxiliary Corps officers' field uniform, with the M1916 *Maciejówka* bearing the silver officer's rosette below the eagle-and-shield badge, and a silver twisted chincord. The ornate M1916 collar rank insignia comprise 3 gold stars placed centrally above a silver wire *wężyk* zigzag pattern set on wide silver Russian braid. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

# Eastern Legion & II Bde uniforms and insignia

**(<u>see also Table 7</u>)**

In an attempt to 'Austrianize' the Polish Legions, II Bde dismounted personnel, including 2nd and 3rd Inf Regts, wore M1908, later M1915 field-green uniforms with a Polish turnover collar. A variety of field caps were worn with the M1913 Polish eagle-and-shield badge bearing the letter 'L' (for Legion). These included the *Maciejówka* (favoured by officers); the M1915 Polish field cap, essentially an M1908 AH cap but with a flat, square crown; and the *rogatywka*, the M1908 field cap with a higher square crown. 2nd and 3rd Inf Regts also adopted during the Carpathian campaign the field-green *Karpatówka* ('Carpathian cap') with a peak and deep fold-up neck flaps.

2nd Lancer Regt wore an Austrian-style M1914 pike-grey service tunic and lambskin-lined over-jacket, with an M1914 *Sokol* Mounted Section

shako with a black leather crown, wide band and peak, a white plume at the left front, and an M1913 silver Polish eagle-and-shield badge smaller than that of 1st Regiment. The M1914 peakless field cap had a 2-button neckflap and the M1914 eagle cockade as worn by the Bartoszów Sections, showing a silver eagle on an amaranth disc edged silver. This badge was also worn on the M1915 field-green field *rogatywka* with a black leather chinstrap and peak, adopted from 16 Aug 1915 when the uniform colour changed to field-green.

II Bde rank insignia were supposed to follow the AH pattern, with silver braid and 6-point stars arranged in a triangular pattern on rectangular collar patches scalloped at the rear edge. In fact most troops, including infantry (colour *Landsturm* green) continued to place their rank stars in a central line, field officers on the silver braid. Initially the Austrians prescribed 8-point rank rosettes as worn by military officials, but the Poles refused to wear these, and ‘combatant’ stars were permitted.

# III Brigade Polish Legions, 8 May 1915–3 Aug 1916

III Brigade was formed 8 May 1915 in Piotrków Trybulanski, Congress Poland; it comprised 4th Inf Regt, 5th Cav Sqn (formed 24 June 1915), and an artillery battery. The infantry and cavalry units were temporarily attached to I Bde, fighting at Jastków (31 July–3 Aug) and Kamionka (4–7 Aug). On 10 Sept 1915 the brigade, now with 4th and 6th Inf Regts (latter formed 27 July), 5th Cav Sqn and an artillery battery, were deployed to Volhynia and the Stokhid line. From 29 Sept to 23 Nov, 4th and 5th Inf Regts formed 1st Tactical Group fighting at Kołek nad Stryrem and in November on the Stokhid. The brigade, reconstituted in Nov 1915, spent winter 1915/16 at Nowe Kukle (now Kukly). It fought at Kostiuchnówka and on the Stockhid River (4–6 July 1916), the Cheremoshne River and at Rudka Miryńska (3 Aug), retreating to Baranowicze during August.

III Brigade used the same **uniforms and insignia** as II Brigade. Headgear were the *Maciejówka* (favoured by officers) and the M1915 Polish field cap; 4th and 6th Inf Regts also wore the field-green *Galicówka* (‘Galician cap’), a high, square-crowned cap with an M1914 Polish eagle-and-shield badge and light-brown leather chinstrap and peak.

*Pułkownik* Józef Haller von Hallenburg commanding II Bde of the Polish Legions in July 1916. Haller's dramatic desertion to Russian lines at Rarańcza with part of his brigade on 15 Feb 1918 marked him for rapid advancement; he commanded Polish II Corps in Russia from 28 March, and the Polish Army in France from 4 Oct, and would give distinguished service in the Russo-Polish War of 1919–21. Here he wears the field-green Polish Auxiliary Corps uniform with a *Maciejówka* with an M1914 Polish eagle-and-Amazon-shield badge and a silver chincord. The 3 gold stars of colonel's rank are lined up centrally on silver Russian braid set on infantry-green scalloped collar patches. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

# Polish Auxiliary Corps, 20 Sept 1916–19 Feb 1918

By mid-1916 the Polish Legions had become disillusioned, because the superb military reputation they had earned on the Volhynian front had not secured political progress towards an independent Poland. The Germans and Austro-Hungarians were unsympathetic, and at Baranowicze on 20 Sept 1916 the Austro-Hungarians downgraded the Legions to the 'Polish Auxiliary Corps' (*Polski Korpus Posiłkowy*, PKP). On 6 Oct the PKP was withdrawn to Nowogrodziec for reorganization. The Legion battle order was basically preserved, with I–III Bdes each comprising 2 infantry regiments, but grouped differently in order to dilute Józef Piłsudski's charismatic influence. 7th Inf Regt was disbanded, its personnel shared between 1st and 5th Regts; 1st and 2nd Lancer Regts and 1st Arty Regt were retained.

The German and Austro-Hungarian emperors' proclamation of 5 Nov 1916 finally announced the creation of a Polish state in Congress Poland. This encouraged Piłsudski and many Poles, but the formation of the Polish Armed Forces (PSZ) on 10 Apr 1917 alongside the PKP was condemned as a cynical German ploy to use Polish troops as cannon-fodder. On 9 July 1917 the 3 PKP Bdes were ordered to swear allegiance to Germany and Austro-Hungary; I and III Bdes refused, and about 15,000 officers and men were interned in camps in Congress Poland. Most II Bde personnel took the oath and were transferred as II PKP Bde to serve under AH command. This 7,566-strong brigade under *Pułkownik* Józef Haller was sent to Przemyśl and Medyka in W. Galicia, and then on 25 Oct 1917 to the Czerniowce (now Chernivtsi, Ukraine) sector of the Bukovina front. There, on 15 Feb 1918, Haller led 2,500 troops over to Russian lines at Rarańcza (now Ridkivtsi, Ukraine), later joining II Polish Corps in Bessarabia (part of Russia). The remaining majority of II Bde and all of 2nd Cav Regt were drafted into the AH Army, or interned in Huszt (now Khust, Ukraine) and Máramaros County POW camps.

Zygmunt Zieliński, GOC Polish Auxiliary Corps, 25 Apr 1917–19 Feb 1918, promoted *General-major* 1 Nov 1917. This highly decorated officer wears the Polish Armed Forces M1917 field-grey service uniform; his *Maciejówka* shows the silver Polish eagle-and-Amazon-shield, officers' rosette, and silver

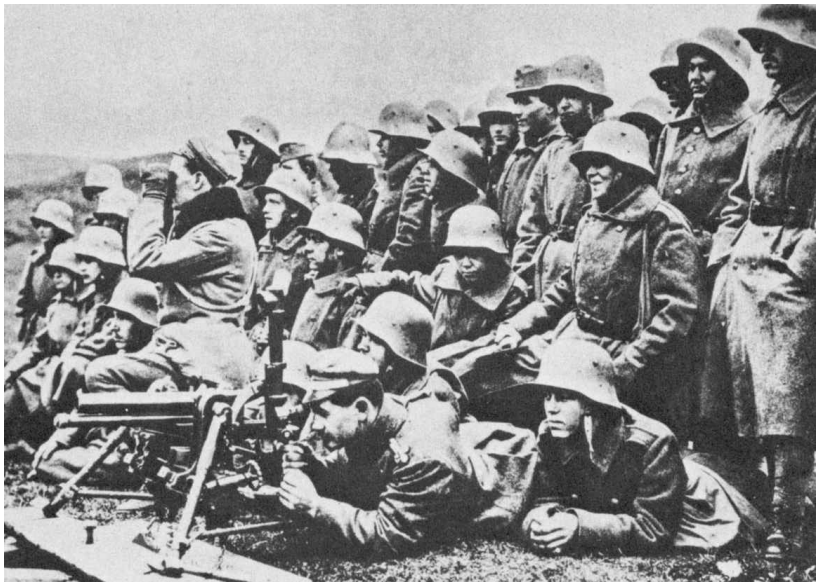
braid chinstrap. His general officers' magenta collar patches display triple silver wire *wężyk* braid, and a gold rank star and crown are pinned on his plaited trefoil shoulder cords, which are set on magenta cloth underlay piped in white. (Author's collection)

# Polish Auxiliary Corps uniforms and insignia

**(see also Table 7)**

The M1916 officers' ceremonial uniform included the *Maciejówka* with Polish eagle-and-shield, band rosette, and double silver chincords. A double-breasted M1916 field-green tunic had a stand collar with silver zigzag braid along the front and bottom edges (lancers: front and upper edges, on amaranth collars); 2 rows of 7 silver buttons; internal slash waist pockets with swallow-tailed buttoned flaps; a silver button above pointed cuffs; and amaranth piping to cuffs, pocket-flaps, front, and shoulder straps. Silver rank insignia on silver cord were worn on rounded shoulder straps with branch-colour piping.

On the M1916 field-green tunic field officers wore collar patches with 6-point stars and gold wire zigzag on wide silver braid on collars piped in branch colour, while subalterns had silver stars and zigzag collar braid. Enlisted ranks wore silver stars and narrow zigzag braid on the field tunic collar, and diagonal silver bars on field-green shoulder straps.



A PSZ subaltern (kneeling, left) instructs his assault platoon on the German 7.92mm 08 heavy machine gun as part of their storm-troop training, 1917. The officer wears an M1917 field-grey *Maciejówka* cap

and displays trefoil shoulder cords.The trainees wear German M1916 helmets and either officers' double-breasted or rankers' single-breasted greatcoats. (Author's collection)

# The Polish Armed Forces, 10 Apr 1917–11 Nov 1918

The PSZ (*Polska Siła Zbrojna*), often contemptuously referred to by its German translation *Polnische Wehrmacht*, was formed on 10 Apr 1917 and commanded by the German governor-general, LtGen Hans von Beseler. The PSZ was essentially a cadre army, comprising a Training Inspectorate which would eventually establish fighting units. Few patriotic Poles were willing to enlist, and by May 1917 only 2,132 suitable volunteers had taken the oath of allegiance, being assigned to garrison duty in Congress Poland. Following pressure from the Polish Regency Council, on 1 May 1918 Gen von Beseler reorganized the Training Inspectorate as an infantry brigade HQ for 1st and 2nd Inf Regiments. On 19 Oct 1918 he handed over command to the Regency Council, which formed 3rd Inf Regt in November, and expanded PSZ recruitment to 9,000 men. On 11 Nov 1918 the PSZ became the Armed Forces of the Polish Second Republic.

# Polish Armed Forces uniforms and insignia

(**see also Table 7**)

The M1917 uniform was worn by the PSZ reporting to the Provisional and Regency Councils, and from 11 Nov 1918 by the Army of the Polish Republic – officially until 1 Nov 1919, actually until October 1920.

The uniform was in German greenish-grey (*feldgrau*, 'field-grey'). Officers wore the *Maciejówka* with branch-colour crown piping and band welt, M1917 crowned Polish eagle-and-shield with the unit number, silver rosette, and silver braid chinstrap. The officers' tunic had a high turnover field-grey (general officers, crimson) collar with double silver zigzag braid (generals, triple) on the collar-patch front and lower edge; shoulder straps; 6x M1830 silver front buttons with Polish eagles; 4 external pleated pockets with square buttoned flaps; 2 back buttons; pointed cuffs with a single button behind; and branch-colour piping to collar, front, pocket flaps and cuffs. The double-breasted officers' greatcoat had a high turnover collar with a branch-colour collar patch scalloped at the rear and an eagle button; 2 rows of 6

buttons; deep turnback cuffs; and internal slash waist pockets with flaps. Branch-colour piping was worn on the front edge, cuffs and pocket flaps.

Rankers wore the *Maciejówka* with an M1917 Polish eagle-and-shield and a field-grey band welt; or a higher, floppier version of the M1915 field *rogatywka* cap with a crowned Polish eagle on a red oval national cockade. The field-grey tunic had a high turnover collar and narrow zigzag braid; rectangular shoulder straps; 6 eagle front buttons; internal slash waist pockets with diagonal buttoned flaps; and plain turnback cuffs. The field-grey greatcoat had a turnover collar with branch-colour 'spearhead' collar patches; rectangular shoulder straps with branch-colour piping; 6 front buttons; internal slash waist pockets with flaps; and deep turnback cuffs. The lancer tunic for all ranks was the M1916 pattern in field-grey.

Officers wore silver wire straight or plaited trefoil shoulder straps with gold rank stars and crowns, on branch-colour underlay. NCOs had silver braid rank bars and edging on rectangular (cavalry, scalloped) shoulder straps with branch-colour piping.

# POLISH FORCES IN FRANCE, 1914–1918

## French Army, Aug 1914–June 1917

On 21 Aug 1914 the French government allowed Polish immigrants, many from French branches of the Riflemen's and *Sokol* societies, to join the French Foreign Legion (*Légion Étrangère*). Some 180 Poles formed the 2nd Co of C Bn, 2nd Marching Regt/ 1st Foreign Regt (2e RM/ 1er RE); unofficially called the Bayonne Legion, this battalion, including a Czech and a Swiss company, trained at Bayonne in SW France. The 2e RM/ 1er RE defended the Prunay sector in Champagne (22 Oct 1914–Apr 1915), then transferred to Artois, where their bravery at Vimy Ridge on 9 May reduced the regiment by 50 per cent and the Polish company to 50 men. A final action at Hill 119 near Notre Dame de Lorette (16–17 June) virtually wiped out the remaining Poles, and C Bn was disbanded. Troops wore the standard dark-blue and red field uniform with red regimental collar number '1', and a non-regulation breast badge comprising a silver eagle on a gold cross, on a green rhombus striped pink; the companies also carried their own national *fanions* (small rifle flags or pennants).

Another Polish company formed on 29 Aug 1914 at Rueil, near Paris, joined the short-lived 3e RM/ 1er RE, and was transferred to the 2e RM when the 3e RM was disbanded in July 1915. Other Polish volunteers served individually in French units.

Józef Haller, appointed commander of the Polish Army in France on 4 Oct 1918, wearing the French horizon-blue uniform of a *generał dywizji,* to which rank he was promoted on 29 November. The *rogatywka* cap has a silver M1914 Polish eagle with the 'WP' (*Woysko Polskie* – Polish Army) monogram on the Amazon shield; bright-red crown piping; and a bright-red band, with 2 lines of silver zigzag braid, and 3 silver rank stars in a triangle below the badge. The general officer's tunic had silver buttons, a plain collar and shoulder straps, and 2 zigzag stripes on bright-red pointed cuffs. (Author's collection)

# Polish Army in France, 4 June 1917–1 Sept 1919

Following the United States' declaration of war on Germany (6 Apr 1917), from 4 June the French government formed the 'Polish Army in France' (*Armia Polska we Francji*) under French command. The troops wore French M1915 'horizon-blue' uniforms, thus earning the nickname 'Blue Army' (*Błękliną Armią*), otherwise 'Haller's Army' after its first Polish commander. The officer corps comprised 1,402 Frenchmen and 1,239 Poles. The Army was commanded by MajGen Louis Archinard (6 June 1917), then *Generał Dywizji* Józef Haller von Hallenburg (1 Oct–11 Nov 1918).

By March 1919 the Army would number about 108,000 men, including 35,000 Polish immigrants in France; 2,800 Poles from the German Army taken prisoner in France; about 30,000 from the Austro-Hungarian Army in POW camps in France; 25,000 Polish-Americans, especially from Chicago

and Pittsburgh, many belonging to the ‘Polish Falcons (*Sokol*) of America’; volunteers from the disbanded Russian Expeditionary Corps on the Western Front; and individual recruits from across the world, including 300 from Brazil. Before transferring to France, Polish prisoners of the AH Army in Italy were formed into 8 regts totalling 21 bns: 1st Regt J.H. Dąbrowski, 2nd Tadeusz Kościusko, 3rd Giuseppe Garibaldi, and others named after Francesco Nullo, Adam Mickiewisz, Zawisza Czarny, Bartosz Głowacki and Stefan Czemiecki.

The 1st Polish Rifle Div (*1. Dywizja Strzelców Polskich*) was formed in June 1918, followed Dec 1918–Feb 1919 by 4 more numbered 2nd, 3rd, 6th and 7th, and in May 1919 by the Training Div (*Dywizja Instrukcyina*) with 1st–3rd Training Regiments. II Polish Corps in the East joined Haller’s command 11 May 1918, but its 4th and 5th Rifle Divs did not transfer to France (see below under ‘Polish Forces in the Russian Partition’). Four divisions in France were divided into I and III Corps (*Korpus*) in early 1919. They comprised 15 Rifle regts, numbered 1–12 (1st Regt including survivors from the Bayonne Legion) and 19–21. Each Rifle Regt (*Pułk Strzelców Polskich*; Apr–May 1919, Dismounted Rifle Regt, *Pułk Strzelców Pieszych*) had 3 battalions.

Despite Poland’s strong cavalry traditions only 3 Light Horse Regts were formed, totalling 6 bns, each bn (*Dywizjon Szwoleźerów*) intended for divisional reconnaissance. There were 6 divisional field artillery regts, 5 divisional engineer bns, and the independent 1st Tank Regt (*1. Pułk Czolgów*) formed Apr 1919 with 120 light tanks. In 1919 the French Air Service transferred 98 aircraft in 7 squadrons to Poland – 3 each with Breguet 14 A2 (designated BR and a number) and Salmson 2 (SAL) reconnaissance aircraft, and one with SPAD SVII ‘recce escort’ scouts.

1st Rifle Div was the only Blue Army formation formed before the 11 Nov 1918 Armistice. In Feb 1918 the 1st Rifle Regt marched to Sainte Tanche camp on the Champagne front near Rheims, where on 4 June it manned a sector of the trenches under French Fourth Army. It halted the German offensive against Saint Hilaire-le-Grand on 25 July during a successful counterattack at Bois de Raquette, inflicting heavy losses on the German 66th Inf Regt (113th Inf Div), which included some Polish conscripts. Relieved on 10 Aug, 1st Rifle Regt was joined at Sainte Tanche by 2nd and 3rd Rifle Regts and I Bn/ 1 Lt Horse Regt, forming 1st Rifle Division. In Sept 1918 the

div joined French Eighth Army at Nancy in Lorraine, reaching the front on 14 Oct at Moyenmoutier in the Vosges mountains. It was selected for the final offensive through Alsace-Lorraine into western Germany, but the Armistice effectively forestalled this.

A *podporucznik* of the 1st Rifles Regt of the Polish Army in France in horizon-blue service uniform, 1918. This second lieutenant's *rogatywka* has rifle-green piping, a silver chinstrap, and a horizon-blue cloth oval with one silver rank bar; unusually, it lacks the M1914 eagle-and-shield badge. The uniform-colour collar patches have rifle-green piping to the scalloped rear edges, and the Rifles' bugle-horn below the regimental number in silver for officers. His shoulder straps bear a silver wire Eagle of Kazimierz the Great on a red cloth oval. He has been awarded the French *Croix de Guerre*, and the right breast pocket badge commemorates the original 'Bayonne Legion' of the French Foreign Legion in 1914–15. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Archive, photo B.33-021)

The 6 Polish divs (1st–3rd, 6th & 7th Rifle, Training) left France by train 14 Apr–3 June 1919. On arrival in Poland 1st, 2nd and 6th Rifle Divs were committed to defending Poland from Ukrainian, West Ukrainian and Soviet Russian forces, while 3rd, 7th and Training Divs operated in regimental tactical groups. In Sept 1919 they were renumbered as 4 inf divs (numbered 11–13 & 18) of the new Polish Army, and most French officers returned home. The Dismounted Rifle Regts (numbered 1–15, & 19) and the remaining 20th and 21st Polish Rifle Regts were redesignated Borderland Inf Rifle Regts (sing: *Pułk Piechoty Strelców Kresowych*) numbered 43–54, 143–

145, & 149–151. The 3 Light Horse Regts were briefly re-formed as 4th Borderland Dragoon Regt, then as Mounted Rifles (*Pułk Strelców Konnych*), and 3 Arty Regts were redesignated Borderland Field Arty Regts numbered 12, 13 & 113. There was only one engineer battalion. The 1st Tank Regt had 1st Bn (1st & 2nd Cos) and 2nd Bn (3rd, 6th & 7th Companies). The French air contingent flew to Poland Apr–Oct 1919, where Polish crews replaced the French, and the units were redesignated as new or absorbed into existing Polish squadrons. The Blue Army formations and units were the best equipped of Poland's armed forces, and were amongst the most effective on the battlefield.[1]

**1** See MAA 497, *Armies of the Russo-Polish War 1919–21*, pp 16–22, 24

**Table 2: Polish Army in France: 4 June 1917–1 September 1919**

**I Corps** (19.2.–1.9.1919).
**1 Rifle Div** (17.6.1918) / **13 Borderland Inf Div** (9.9.1919).
- 1 Polish Rifle Regt (10.1.1918); St. Hilaire-le-Grand (25.7.1918); Moyenmoutier, (4.10.1918) / 1 Dismounted Rifles Regt (5.1919) / 43 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- 2 Polish Rifle Regt (3.4.1918) ; La Tanche (8.1918); Moyenmoutier (14.10.1918) / 2 Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919) / 44 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- 3 Polish Rifle Regt (16.2.1918); la Tanche (8.1918); Moyenmoutier (14.10.1918) / 3 Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919) / 45 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919). Regt Borderland Rifles (17.9.1919).
- I Bn, 1 Lt Horse Regt (3.1918); La Tanche (8.1918); Moyenmoutier, (14.10.1918); II Bn, 4 Lt Horse Regt (4.1919) / 4 Borderland Dragoon Regt (1.9.1919) / 2 Mtd Rifles Regt (1.10.1919).
- 1 Field Arty Bn (5.1918) / 1 Field Arty Regt (11.1918) / 13 Borderland Lt Arty Regt (1.9.1919).
- I Eng Bn (9.11.1917) / XIII Sapper Bn (1.9.1919).

**2 Rifle Div** (4. 1919) / **11 Carpathian Inf Div** (16.9.1919).
- 1 J. H. Dąbrowski Polish Rifle Regt (11.1918) / 4 Polish Rifle Regt (1.1919) / 4 Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919) / 46 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- 1 & II Bns, 2 Tadeusz Kościusko Polish Rifle Regt (12.1918) / 5 Polish Rifle Regt (1.1919) / 5 Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919) / 47 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- 6 Polish Rifle Regt (5.3.1919) / 6 Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919) / 48 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- II Bn, 1 Light Horse Regt (12.1918) / 4 Borderland Dragoon Regt (1.9.1919) / 6 Mtd Rifles Regt (1.10.1919).
- 2 Field Arty Regt (5.1918) / 11 Borderland Field Arty Regt (1.9.1919).
- II Eng Bn (1919) / XI Sapper Bn (1.9.1919)

**III Corps** (28.3.–1.9.1919).
**3 Rifle Div** (12.1918) / independent regts (4.1919) / **18 Inf Div** (23.1.1920).
- III Bn, 3 Giuseppe Garibaldi Rifle Regt (1.1919) / 7 Polish Rifle Regt (2.1919) / 7 Dismounted Rifle Regt (4.1919) / 149 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919) / 49 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (3.1920).
- I, II Bns, Francesco Nullo Regt (12.1918) / 8 Francesco Nullo Polish Rifle Regt (2.1919) / 8 Francesco Nullo Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919) / 50 Francesco Nullo Inf Regt Borderland Rifles
- I, II Bns, 3 Giuseppe Garibaldi Regt (1.1919) / 9 Giuseppe Garibaldi Polish Rifle Regt (2.1919) / 9 Giuseppe Garibaldi Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919); 51 Giuseppe Garibaldi Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- I Bn, 3 Lt Horse Regt (2.1919) / 4 Borderland Dragoon Regt (1.9.1919) / 6 Mtd Rifles Regt (1.10.1919).
- 3 Field Arty Regt (1919) / one Bn to 11–13 Field Arty Regts (1919).
- III Engineeer Bn (1918) / XII Sapper Bn (1.9.1919)

**6 Rifle Div** (2.1919) / **12 Inf Div** (1.9.1919)
- I, II Bns, Adam Mickiewicz Regt (20.12.1918) / 10 Polish Rifle Regt (2.1919) / 10 Dismounted Rifles Regt (5.1919) / 52 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- III Bns, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Adam Mickiewicz, & Francesco Nullo Regts (1.1919) / 11 Polish Rifle Regt (2.1919) / 11 Dismounted Rifles Regt (5.1919) / 53 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- II Bn, Francesco Nullo Regt (12.1918) / 12 Polish Rifle Regt (2.1919) / 12 Dismounted Rifles Regt (14.4.1919) / 54 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- II Bn, 3 Light Horse Regt (2.1919) / 4 Borderland Dragoon Regt (1.9.1919) / 6 Mtd Rifles Regt (1.10.1919).
- 1 General Józef Bem Field Arty Regt (11.1918) / 6 Field Arty Regt (1.5.1919) / 12 Borderland Field Arty Regt (1.9.1919)
- VI Engineeer Bn (1919) / XII Sapper Bn (1.9.1919).

**GHQ Troops**
**7 Rifle Div** (2.1919)/ Tactical Groups (4.1919) / **18 Inf Div** (23.1.1920).
- Bn, Zawisza Czarny Regt (1918) / 19 Polish Rifle Regt (2.1919) / 19 Dismounted Rifles Regt (4.1919) / 143 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919); 4 Podhale Rifle Regt (24.9.1919).
- Bn, Zawisza Czarny Regt (10.1918) / 20 Polish Rifle Regt (4.1919) / 144 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919); 71 Inf Regt (2.1921).
- Bn, Zawisza Czarny Regt (20.12.1918) / 21 Polish Rifles Regt (26.5.1919) / 145 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919); 72 Inf Regt (5.3.1921).
- I Bn, 4 Lt Horse Regt (4.1919) / 1 Bn, 4 Borderland Dragoon Regt (1.9.1919) / III Bn, 1 Mtd Rifles Regt (1.10.1920) / 1 Mtd Rifles Regt (5.1921).
- 2 Field Arty Regt (1919) / 7 Field Arty Regt (5.1919) / 113 Borderland Field Arty Regt (6.1919) / 18 Field Arty Regt (7.3.1920).
- VII Eng Bn (1919) / XVIII Sapper Bn (1.9.1919)

**Training Div** (3.1919) / Tactical Groups (4.1919) / **18 Inf Div** (23.1.1920).
- I, III Bns, Bartosz Głowacki Rifle Regt (12.1918) / 1 Grenadier-Light Inf Training Regt (3.1919) / 13 Polish Rifle Regt (5.1919) / 13 Dismounted Rifles Regt (3.5.1919) / 150 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919) / 42 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (28.10.1919).
- Stefan Czarniecki Rifle Regt (12.1918) / 2 Grenadier-Lt Inf Training Regt (21.4.1919) / 14 Dismounted Rifles Regt (19.7.1919) / 151 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (24.9.1919) / 3 Podhale Rifle Regt (30.10.1919).
- 3 Grenadier- Light Inf Training Regt (4.1919) / 15 Dismounted Rifles Regt (1.8.1919) / 49 Inf Regt Borderland Rifles (1.9.1919).
- Training Sqn, Lt Horse (1919) – Field Arty Training Regt (1919) – Eng Training Bn.

# Uniforms and equipment

The French horizon-blue uniform was regulation 30 Sept 1917–1 Nov 1919, and continued to be worn in Poland until mid-1920.

For headgear all ranks wore the M1915 Adrian helmet with a ‘Jagiellonian eagle’ badge (a crowned eagle with curved, outstretched wings; Rifles wore an eagle in a bugle-horn). Officers wore the M1917 square-crowned *rogatywka* peaked cap with branch-colour piping to the crown, seams, and

upper band edge; a silver Jagiellonian eagle with a shield; button-colour braid chinstrap; and black patent-leather peak. Also displayed was a regimental number or 'WP' (*Wojsko Polskie*, Polish Army) above a repeat of button-colour cuff rank insignia on a uniform-colour oval patch. General officers had silver zigzag embroidery on a crimson cap band. Officers also wore the rankers' M1917 peakless field *rogatywka*, or an M1918 French *bonnet de police* with pointed corners.

Officers and NCOs wore an M1915 single-breasted 9-button tunic with a standing collar or an M1917 6-button model with a turnover collar; pointed shoulder straps with a silver wire 'eagle of Kazimierz the Great' (crowned eagle with downward-pointing wings and outstretched talons and tail) on a red cloth oval; external pleated breast pockets with buttoned scalloped or square flaps; large bellows pleated or unpleated waist pockets with buttoned square flaps; and turnback cuffs. General officers had pointed crimson cuffs with zigzag chevrons. Some officers wore a 'British-style' tunic with an open collar over a horizon-blue shirt and tie. Plain breeches (general officers, dark-blue seam-piping between 2 stripes) were worn with black riding boots. Officers wore the all-ranks' double-breasted greatcoat, with rectangular shoulder straps bearing the eagle-on-oval badge; 2 rows of 6 buttons; turnback cuffs; and internal waist pockets with 2-button slash flaps.

Junior NCOs could wear the M1917 peaked service *rogatywka*. Otherwise they and privates wore the peakless field *rogatywka* with branch-colour piping; a green (silver for NCOs) bugle-horn for Rifles, and unofficially the M1914 Bartoszów Sections' cockade; or the M1918 peakless field cap without a badge. The 6-button M1917 tunic had a turnover collar; pointed shoulder straps with a white thread Jagiellonian eagle on a crimson oval; internal breast pockets with buttonless square flaps; and waist slash pockets with buttonless flaps. The French M1915 rankers' 5-button tunic was also worn, with internal waist pockets and M1917 turnover collar and shoulder straps added. Following French practice, NCOs and privates wore the greatcoat in combat with the front skirt buttoned back. The uniform was completed with plain breeches, puttees, and brown leather ankle boots.

An officer (left) and ranker of the 1st Engineer Bn of the 1st Rifle Div, Polish Army in France, both wearing French horizon-blue uniforms. The officer has an enlisted ranks' peakless *rogatywka* with an unofficial metal unit badge, and the branch badge of a gold helmet-and-cuirass on a black cloth backing; the 'Saxon' patches on the turndown collar of his M1917 tunic are black velvet piped with red, and bear the gold regimental number. His companion wears the M1915 enlisted ranks' tunic without breast pockets, its standing collar bearing M1915 patches. (Author's collection)

# Rank insignia

**(<u>see also Table 6</u> )**

All ranks wore insignia inspired by the French Army M1913 sequence on both cuffs of the tunic and greatcoat. General officers wore 3-2 silver stars above the pointed crimson cuff with 2-1 bands of silver zigzag embroidery. Other officers wore 5-1 silver, later button-colour braid bars (*podpułkownik*, gold, later reversed button-colour third bar). Senior NCOs – *aspirant* (officer cadet), *adiutant* and *sierżant major* – wore respectively a silver loop, a chevron point up (later button-colour with red threads), and 2 silver diagonal cuff braids. A *sierżant*, as a junior NCO, wore a silver, and men 2-0 red (later dark blue; Rifles, dark green) diagonal cuff braids.

General officers wore 3-2 silver stars on the front of the service *rogatywka*'s crimson band with 2-1 silver zigzag lines. Field and subaltern officers wore horizon-blue cloth ovals on the cap band with miniature cuff rank bars, a distinction later extended to NCOs. All ranks wore the cloth oval rank insignia on the field *rogatywka*, from 1918 button-colour braid or gimp rank chevrons, and rank chevrons on the front of the M1918 peakless field cap.

# Branch insignia

**(see also Table 8 )**

Branch and unit affiliation was indicated by a rectangular patch, with scalloped double piping (*soutache*) on the rear edge, on the stand collar of the 9-button M1915 officers' and NCOs' tunic. Instead, the turnover collars of the 6-button M1917 officers' and NCOs' tunic, and the 6-button Polish and 5-button French junior NCOs' and men's tunic, displayed from Jan 1917 a 'Saxon patch' shaped like a pie-slice, with double piping on the curved top edge. When worn open-necked the tunic had a plain collar or a metal unit number only. The greatcoat had the French M1915 kite-shaped patch with double piping on the top 2 edges.

The collar patches were in branch facing-colour cloth with a silver (1918, button-colour) double *soutache* for officers and senior NCOs (General Staff officers, silver zigzag), and for junior NCOs and men a double *soutache* in a second branch colour. Most collar patches bore a unit number (Rifles, with bugle-horn) in the *soutache* colour.

The service and field *rogatywka* caps and breeches had piping in the branch facing colour (general officers, dark blue with 2 wide breeches stripes; Rifles, dark green). The Tank Regt wore field artillery insignia with a dragon badge on the left upper sleeve in branch *soutache* colour, while Signals wore Engineer insignia with lightning bolts.

# POLISH FORCES IN THE RUSSIAN PARTITION

As many as 200,000 Poles, from all over the empire, are estimated to have served in the Imperial Russian Army during World War I. They were normally posted to units other than those of Warsaw Military District, to avoid national concentrations. However, there were exceptions to this policy.

## Puławy Legion, 30 Nov 1914–5 Feb 1915

The principal Polish political party in Congress Poland was the National Democratic Party, co-founded in 1895 by Roman Dmowski, arch-rival of Piłsudski. Dmowski welcomed the manifesto published on 14 Aug 1914 by the Russian C-in-C, the Grand Duke Nicholas, proposing that following an Allied victory Poland should be reunited as an autonomous state under the Tsar as monarch. On 25 Nov 1914 Dmowski established the Polish National Committee (KNP) to promote the war effort in Congress Poland. Since October volunteers had been registering for Polish national units in the Russian Imperial Army, but it was not until 30 Nov that the I Polish Legion (usually known as the Puławy Legion, *Legion Puławski*) was formed at Puławy (official Russian name 1848–1918, Novo Alexandriya). In Feb 1915 the unit had 17 officers and 909 other ranks. The II Polish Legion (Lublin Legion, *Legion Lubelski*), was formed 4 Feb 1915, with a 300-man Lancer Bn at Krępa and Ksawerynow near Maciejowice. These units formed the Russian 59th Defence Brigade.

Infantry officers' khaki ceremonial **uniform** comprised a peaked cap with a red band and a silver M1914 Polish eagle superimposed on a black-and-orange oval cockade. The tunic had a red plastron; silver *pogoni* shoulder straps with red piping and centre-stripes, and a gold first-pattern curved or second-pattern angular 'LP' monogram (30 Nov 1914), later 'LP' above Legion numbers I or II (Jan 1915). Rankers had a lambswool cap with eagle-and-cockade badge; the service field shirt (*gymnastiorka*), a pullover garment worn outside the trousers, had a red plastron front piped white, and red shoulder straps with a yellow monogram. Greatcoats had red collar patches

piped red. Officers' khaki field uniform comprised a peaked cap, and a tunic with khaki shoulder straps with crimson piping and centre-stripes. Rankers had a peaked cap, and a plain khaki field shirt with a yellow monogram on khaki shoulder straps.

Although the Puławy Legion won prestige as the first Polish unit in Congress Poland in 1914, it never saw action. This lancer wears the ceremonial uniform: a red peaked cap with white band; blue tunic with red collar, plastron and pointed cuffs, red shoulder straps piped blue, and silver buttons; blue riding breeches with broad red stripes. He carries an M1909 sabre. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

Lancer officers wore a dark-blue ceremonial uniform with a red peaked cap with a white band. The blue tunic had red collar, cuffs and plastron, and silver shoulder straps with blue piping and red stripes. Rankers' red shoulder straps were piped blue and bore a gold monogram. Greatcoats had red collar patches piped blue. All ranks wore the Legion field uniform with dark-blue breeches. Russian Army rank insignia and rank titles were used until autumn 1917.

## Polish People's Militia, 5 Feb–15 Oct 1915

On 5 Feb 1915 the 2 legions were reorganized as 'People's Militia' (*Narodnoe Opolcheniye*) units of the Russian Imperial Army, intended for line-of-communications duties but often deployed to the front. The I and II Legions became the 739th Novo Alexandriya and 740th Lublin Militia Bns, and 1st and 2nd Lancer Sqns initially the 104th and 105th (5 July 1915, 115th and 116th) Cav Squadrons. These units formed the 104th People's Militia Bde, although still popularly known as the Puławy Legion. Troops wore khaki Russian field uniforms with the 'LP' monogram, later replaced by the unit number above нпд (People's Polish Battalion).

On 20 March 1915 the 800-strong 739th Bn was sent to the front in eastern Congress Poland under the élite Russian Grenadier Corps. It fought against German Ninth Army, sustaining massive casualties at Pakosław (20 May 1915), Michałów (15 June), Władysławów (17 July), Nurzec (20 Aug) and Opaka (23 Aug), before withdrawing on 18 September. The Russians did not deploy the 740th Bn, but used its personnel as replacements for the 739th. Meanwhile the 2 cav sqns fought on the Lithuanian Front, combining in Oct 1915 to form a Lancer Battalion. The remnant of the Puławy Legion was withdrawn to Bobruisk (now Babruysk, E. Belarus) in Sept 1915, and disbanded on 15 October.

## Polish Rifle Brigade & Division, 5 Oct 1915–Sept 1917

The Polish Rifle Brigade (*Brygada Strelców Polskich*) was formed in Oct 1915 in Smolensk around survivors of the Puławy Legion. It comprised I–IV Rifle Bns, Reserve Bn, Lancer Bn (1 & 2 Sqns), Engineer Co and medical services, totalling 8,000 men. It rejoined the Grenadier Corps on the

Belarusian front at Baranovichi (now Baranavichi) in March 1916. Fighting both German and AH forces, it took heavy losses at Novogrudok (now Navahrudak, W. Belarus). On 11 Jan 1917 the brigade was withdrawn from the front to Kiev (now Kyiv, Ukraine) Military District, where it reorganized as a division.

The Polish Rifle Division (*Diwizija Strelców Polskich*) comprised 4 Rifle Regts (1–4) each with 4 bns; a 12,000-strong Reserve Regt; 1st Lancer Bn (3 Apr 1917, 1st Lancer Regt of 4 sqns); Engineer Co, and medical services, but no organic field artillery. Following the 'February Revolution' Polish enlistments expanded the division to 35,000, causing the Russian authorities some unease, and in July 1917 it was transferred to the Husiatyn area of the Galician front. Immediately several units refused to obey the orders of their Russian commanders, and the division was almost disbanded, but as the most reliable formation in the area it was re-formed on 22 July. The Poles fought bravely at Czabarak and Olchowczyk (27 & 30 July) and in a fighting retreat to Minsk, Belarus. Meanwhile the 1st Lancer Regt fought near Tarnopol (now Ternopil) and Stanisławów (now Ivano-Frankivsk), and on 24 July some 400 dismounted troopers defeated 2,500 Germans at Krechowce, earning the distinction '1st Krechowce Lancers'. After a circuitous route via Kharkov (now Kharkiv) into Belarus, the unit reached Minsk in September 1917.

Brigade and division personnel wore standard Russian **uniforms** and rank insignia. Rifles officers had silver service and khaki field shoulder straps with crimson piping, blue centre-stripes, and gold Latin battalion numbers. Rankers wore blue service and khaki field shoulder straps with crimson piping and yellow numbers. Lancer officers had blue piping and crimson centre-stripes, rankers crimson shoulder straps and blue piping.

## Table 3: Polish Army in Russia: 30 November 1914–11 November 1918

**Polish Forces in Russia** (30.11.1914 – autumn 1917)
**- 59 Defence Bde (**2.1915): I (Puławy) Legion (30.11.1914); I Polish Legion (4.2.1915): 1–4 Rifle Cos, MG Co; II Polish Legion (4.2.1915): 1–4 Rifle Cos, MG Co; Lancer Bn (4.2.1915): 1–2 Sqns.
**- 104 People's Militia Bde** (5.2.1915): 739 Bn, Pakosław (20.5.1915); Michałów (15.6.1915); Władysławów (17.7.1915); Nursec (20.8.1915); Opaka (23.8.1915); 740 Bn; 104 Lancer Sqn, 115 Lancer Sqn (5.7.1915); 105 Lancer Sqn, 116 Lancer Sqn (5.7.1915). Bde disbanded 15.10.1915.
**- Polish Rifle Bde** (10.1915): I–IV Rifle Bns, Reserve Bn, Lancer Bn (1–2 Sqns), Engineer Co, Med Services; Novogrudok (3.1916); reorganized as Polish Rifle Div (11.1.1917).
**- Polish Rifle Div** (11.1.1917) 1–4 Rifle Regts (4 bns each); Reserve Regt, later Reserve Bde; 1 Lancer Bn. (3.4.1917) 1 Lancer Regt (4 sqns) (Krechowce (24.7.1917); Engineer Co; Medical Services); Czabarak (27.7.1917); Olchowczyk (30.7.1917); redesignated 1 Polish Rifle Div (autumn 1917).

**I Polish Corps in Russia** (24.7.1917–21.5.1918): Reserve Bde (1, 2 Res Regts); Officers' Legion (12.1917) / Knight's Legion (20.4.1918); 1, 2 Arty Bdes; 1 Heavy Arty Bn; *Związek Broni* armoured train; I Polish Corps Aviation (19.8.1917); 1 Eng Regt; Minsk (31.7.1917); Bobruisk (2.2.–11.3.1918).
**- 1 Polish Rifle Div** (autumn 1917): 1–4 Polish Rifle Regts (2.1917); 1 Arty Bde; Eng Co.
**- 2 Polish Rifle Div** (autumn 1917): 5–8 Polish Rifle Regts (2.1917); 2 Arty Bde; Eng Co.
**- 3 Polish Rifle Div** (autumn 1917): 9–12 Polish Rifle Regts; 3 Arty Bde; Eng Co.
**- Polish Lancer Div** (spring 1918): 1 Lancer Regt (15.9.1917); 2 Lancer Regt (20.11.1917); 3 Lancer Regt (14.11.1917), 1 Horse Arty Bn (3 mounted btys); Mounted Eng Sqn.

**II Polish Corps in Russia** (21.12.1917–11.5.1918): 5 Lancer Regt (1.1918); 6 Lancer Regt (17.12.1917); II Polish Corps Aviation (2.12.1917); 2 Eng Regt (2.2.1918); Kaniów, 10–11.5.1918).
**- 4 Polish Rifle Div** (12.1917–11.5.1918): 13–14 Polish Rifle Regts; 4 Arty Bn, 16 Field Arty Regt;
**- 5 Polish Rifle Div** (12.1917–11.5.1918): 15–16 Polish Rifle Regts.

**II Polish Corps (Polish Army in France)** (2.1919–1.9.1919): 5 Lancer Regt (1.1918); 6 Lancer Regt (17.12.1917); 14 Lancer Regt (9.1918), Jazłowiecen (11–13.7.1919) / 14 Jasłowiec Lancer Regt (2.1920); 1 Armoured Car Detachment; 2 Eng Regt.

**- 4 Polish Rifle Div** (6.1918–19.7.1919): 2 Polish Rifle Regt (24.8.1918) / 15 Polish Rifle Regt (19.7.1919) / 31 Kaniów Rifle Regt (26.8.1919); 13 Polish Rifle Regt (12.1918) / 28 Kaniów Rifle Regt (8.1919); 14 Polish Rifle Regt (12.1918) / 29 Kaniów Rifle Regt (7.1919); / 14 Lancer Regt (13.10.1919); 1 Air Unit (15.10.1918) / 4 Rifle Div Air Sqn (2.2.1919); Eng Co; Murmansk (6.1918); Yekatorinodar (18.9.1918); Odessa (1.12.1918–3.1919); Galicia (6–17.7.1919).
- **5 Polish Rifle Div** (25.1.1919–10.1.1920) : Tadeusz Kosciuszko Rifle Regt (1.7.1918) / 1 Tadeusz Kosciuszko Rifle Regt (17.8.1918); 2 Polish Rifle Regt in Siberia (10.11.1918); 3 Henryk Dąbrowski Rifle Regt (11.1918); Cadre Bn; Assault Bn; 1 Lancer Regt; 5 Field Arty Regt; armd trains *Kraków, Poznań, Poznań II* & *Warszawa*; Eng Bn; Novonikolayevsk (1.1919), Tutal (11.1919), Litvinovo (11.1919); Tajga (11.1919).

**III Polish Corps in Russia** (4.12.1917–10.6.1918); Vinnitsa (14.4.1918).
- **Light Bde** (11.4.1918–10.6.1918); Lt Horse Regt, Carabinier Bn, Rifle Bn, Horse Arty Bn, 1 Armd Car Detachment, armoured train.
- **Litsarki (Officers') Legion**
- **7 Lancer Regt** (defeated Vinnitsa) (14.4.1918).

**Polish Forces in the Russian Red Army (20.8.1917–30.12.1917).**
**-** Reserve Regt, Polish Rifle Div (20.8.1917) / 1 Polish Revolutionary Regt (11.1917). Disbanded 30.12.1917.
**Western Rifle Div** (summer 1918) / 52 Rifle Div (9.6.1919): Mtd Recce unit; Air Unit; Eng Bn; Sigs Bn.
- I Rifle Bde : Revolutionary Red Warsaw Regt; 3 Revolutionary Siedlce Regt; 1 Warsaw Red Hussars Regt; I Lt Arty Bn.
- II Rifle Bde : 2 Revolutionary Lublin Regt; 4 Revolutionary Warsaw Regt; Mazovian Red Lancers Regt; 2 Lt Arty Bn.
- III Rifle Bde : 5 Revolutionary Vilna Regt; 6 Revolutionary Grodno Regt; 1 Warsaw Red Hussars Regt; 3 Lt Arty Bn.

# POLISH CORPS IN RUSSIA, 1917–1918

## I Polish Corps, 24 July 1917–21 May 1918

Following the ‘February Revolution’ (8–12 March 1917, New Style), I Polish Corps in Russia (*I Korpus Polski w Rosji*) was formed 24 July 1917 in Minsk from Polish personnel serving in the increasingly unreliable Russian Army units of the Western and Northern ‘Fronts’ (Army Groups). On 6 Aug 1917 *Generał porucznik* Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki was appointed commander by Gen Lavr Kornilov, C-in-C Russian Armed Forces. Dowbor-Muśnicki took advantage of the political chaos caused by the Bolshevik Revolution of 7 Nov 1917, and by mid-Jan 1918 formed 29,000 troops in Minsk into 1st (ex Polish Rifle Div), 2nd and 3rd Polish Rifle Divs (each with 4 rifle regts), and a Lancer Div with 1st–3rd Lancer Regiments. Surplus officers formed the 300-strong ‘Officers’ Legion’ comprising company-sized Cav, 2nd Inf, 3rd Arty and Special Weapons ‘legions’. On 20 Apr 1918 this 1,000-man unit was renamed the Knights’ Legion (*Legia Rycerska*), with 1st and 2nd Bns and an artillery platoon.

The Corps declared for the Allies and against Germany and Austro-Hungary, but Minsk was threatened both by German Eastern Command occupation forces and by the Bolsheviks’ emerging Red Army. In late Jan 1918 the Corps clashed with Red Army units, including Latvian Red Riflemen. On 31 Jan it was forced out of Minsk and retreated to Bobruisk (now Babruysk), where from 2 Feb it besieged a 7,000-strong Red Army garrison in the city’s fortress. This finally fell on 11 March, with the Knights’ Legion distinguishing themselves, but the Germans forced the Poles to hand the fortress over to them. Meanwhile, I Corps and German forces reoccupied Minsk on 21 February. Dowbor-Muśnicki agreed with the Germans on 28 Feb to occupy 6 Belarusian districts comprising the Mogilev (now Mahilyow)–Zlobin–Slutsk triangle in SE Belarus, with HQ at Bobruisk, thereby severing Red Army communications between Petrograd (now St Petersburg) and Ukraine. However, following the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty

on 3 March 1918 between the Central Powers and the Bolsheviks, the Germans finally ceased cooperation with I Corps in May. Dowbor-Muśnicki agreed to disarm and disband I Corps on 21 May, before retreating with units intact to Poland to form the nucleus of the new Polish Army.

*General porucznik* Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, commander of Polish I Corps in Russia (seated, centre), with his senior officers at Bobruisk, 1918 (**see also Plates F3** & **H1** ). Most are wearing coloured service or khaki field '*English*' peaked caps, with the M1917 'Russian-Polish' eagle-and-shield for Polish forces in Russia; however, the general himself has a 4-cornered *rogatywka* cap. The high-collared '*French*' tunics are of a standard pattern but in differing shades of khaki, and bear rank chevrons on the left sleeve. (Tchakov Collection)

# I Polish Corps uniforms

I Corps adopted new khaki uniforms from 3 Dec 1917. Officers wore a British-shaped peaked service cap with a crowned Polish eagle-and-shield badge without further identification, a brown leather chinstrap, and a khaki patent-leather peak with silver (general officers, gold) edging. The officers' field *rogatywka* had no coloured band or piping. Their French M1915 Adrian helmet was painted khaki, with a white Polish eagle on a white-edged red shield and a narrow amaranth band.

The khaki service tunic, termed a '*French*' in Russia, had 'spearhead' branch- or regimental-colour patches on the high turnover collar; pointed shoulder straps; 5 brown plastic front buttons; external pleated breast and waist pockets with buttoned, scalloped flaps; and straight (Cav and Horse Arty, pointed) cuffs with branch- or regimental-colour piping. On ceremonial order-of-dress a roughly triangular button-on cloth 'gorget' covered the upper

chest, but this was omitted in the field. Khaki breeches with red piping were worn with black riding boots. The ‘Sam Browne’-style belt was brown leather. The double-breasted officers’ greatcoat had 2 rows of 6 buttons and rectangular collar patches in branch or regimental colours.

From 19 Apr 1918 officers were prescribed a rarely seen service uniform, comprising a dark-blue peaked cap with red crown piping and band and black patent-leather peak and chinstrap; a 5-button khaki tunic with turnover collar; branch-colour collar patches; pointed shoulder straps; internal or external breast pockets with buttoned, scalloped flaps, and buttoned shirt-type cuffs. Breeches with dark-blue stripes were worn with black riding boots.

Some general officers wore a tall khaki *rogatwyka* with a red band, gold crown piping and chin chain, or a peaked cap with a red band and gold peak-edging. They displayed red piping to the collar and pocket flaps, and wore dark-blue breeches. Cavalry officers had regimental-colour cap bands, and dark-blue breeches with regimental-colour piping between 2 stripes. Horse Arty officers had a tall *rogatwyka* with crossed gold cannons on the black band, red piping and a silver chin chain; Engineers, silver crossed axes on a black cap band piped red, and a black collar piped red. The Air Service had dark-blue caps with black bands and silver braid chinstraps, and a closed or open-collar dark-blue tunic and breeches. Armoured Car officers had a black cap band, and a dark-blue tunic with a black collar piped crimson.

*General podporucznik* Aleksander Karnicki, deputy commander of Polish I Corps, 1918. As a cavalry general he wears the khaki M1917 lancer shako with red seam-piping and band, 'Russian-Polish' eagle-and-shield, and cavalry chin chain. His double-breasted greatcoat has one central row of decorative brass buttons, red collar-patches piped red, and on the upper left sleeve one M1918 rank chevron of wide gold Russian braid. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

Enlisted ranks wore an all-khaki peaked cap; a khaki field shirt with shoulder straps, spearhead patches on a turnover collar, 3 front buttons, a branch- or regimental-colour cloth gorget, and 2 external pleated breast pockets with buttoned, scalloped flaps. Khaki trousers, piped red, were worn with black leather marching boots, a brown leather belt, and an Adrian helmet with an eagle-and-shield badge and a red painted band. Their double-breasted greatcoat had one row of 6 off-set buttons, and no collar patches.

# I Corps rank and branch insignia

**(see also Table 8 )**

All ranks wore M1917 diagonal-ended or M1918 vertical-ended chevrons point down on the left upper sleeve of the tunic, field shirt and greatcoat. General officers had 3-1 in wide gold Russian braid; field officers, 3-2 medium gold braid; subaltern officers, 4-1 medium gold and silver braid; NCOs, 4-2 M1917 chevrons in narrow piping-colour cloth; *Kapral*, a piping-colour cloth chevron point down, and *Żolnierz* point up. Non-combatant

personnel, in non-combatant branches (e.g. medical, administration and field post) and in combat units, and privates in all branches, wore chevrons point up. In 1918 enlisted ranks adopted 4-0 red cloth chevrons, point down, and non-combatant distinctions were discontinued.

All ranks wore khaki spearhead collar patches with coloured piping and silver unit or branch badges on tunics and field shirts. Infantry wore divisional patch piping: 1st Rifle Div, red; 2nd, black; 3rd, yellow; and Reserve Bde, blue. These colours were repeated in rankers' M1917 rank chevrons. Cloth 'gorgets' (not worn on field uniform) were in the infantry regimental colour within the divisional precedence, with divisional piping: Regts 1, 5, 9, & 1 Reserve, red; Regts 2, 6, 10 & 2 Reserve, white; Regts 3, 7 & 11, yellow; Regts 4, 8 & 12, blue. Lancers wore horizontally divided pennant collar patches: 1st Regt, red over white; 2nd, white over dark blue; 3rd, yellow over white. The top colour was repeated on the cap band and breeches piping and stripes; lancers did not wear cloth gorgets. The Knights' Legion wore a silver 'LR' monogram on black 'Saxon' collar patches piped red, and from Apr 1918 diamond-shaped sleeve badges: 1st Bn, red piped white, 2 Bn black piped red, each with a silver battalion number.

Field and heavy artillery had a black cloth gorget piped red, Mounted Artillery no gorgets; Engineers, a crimson gorget piped black; Signals, a red gorget piped yellow. Military police had red cap bands piped yellow, yellow shoulder-strap piping, gold officers' aiguillettes and yellow rankers' chevrons. Medical personnel wore blue cloth gorgets piped white; Administration, blue gorgets piped red, and rankers red chevrons; and Field Post, orange gorgets piped red.

*Podpułkownik* Czesław Łabuć, commanding 2nd Bn/ Knights' Legion, I Corps, in April 1918. The Legion was composed of surplus officers, reduced in rank: ranks *Pułkownik-Kapitan* became subalterns; *Podkapitan-Porucznik*, NCOs; and *Porucznik-Chorąży*, privates. Łabuć is wearing an '*English*' peaked cap with 'Russian-Polish' eagle-and-shield; note the silver peak-edging. His khaki '*French*' tunic displays the Legion's 'LR' collar-patch monogram, and on the left sleeve this battalion's red-piped black diamond patch, above 3 silver M1917 chevrons for the subaltern rank of *Porucznik*. An enamelled badge on his left breast pocket commemorates service in a previous unit. (Author's collection)

# II Polish Corps in Russia, 21 Dec 1917–11 May 1918

II Corps was formed 21 Dec 1917 in Soroca, Bessarabia (now Moldova) from Poles serving in the former Russian Army, commanded by *Generał porucznik* Sylwester Stankiewicz. It comprised 4th and 5th Polish Rifle Divs, 2 lancer and 1 engineer regiments. The Corps protected local Polish communities, avoiding major engagements with the Central Powers or the Bolsheviks; but on 15 Feb 1918 *Pułkownik* Józef Haller led 2,500 troops from II Bde of the AH-formed Polish Auxiliary Corps across the lines to join Stankiewicz's command. Following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (3 March) the Germans demanded that the 8,000-strong II Corps disband, which Haller (its commander since 28 March) refused to do. German forces therefore attacked and defeated the corps (10–11 May) at Kaniów, Ukraine, inflicting heavy

losses and forcing it to disband. Haller escaped to France, where he later commanded the Polish forces (see above). Five Polish regts (28–31 Inf, 6 Lancers) subsequently adopted the title ‘Kaniów’ in memory of this tragic battle.

*Podkapitan* Stanisław Kobyliński of 7th Rifle Regt, 2nd Rifle Div, I Polish Corps, at Bobruisk in 1918. He holds a khaki peaked cap with a ‘Russian-Polish’ eagle-and-shield. His khaki ‘*French*’ tunic has I Corps’ khaki spearhead collar patches piped black, with a silver regimental number; a woven ‘Russian-Polish’ eagle-and-shield breast badge, indicating service in Russia; and on the left sleeve 4 silver M1917 rank chevrons. (Author’s collection)

# II Corps rank and branch insignia

II Corps wore I Corps uniforms and insignia, but with the khaki field shirt having a high 2-button collar. Rectangular collar patches replaced the spearhead patches, and the M1917 ‘English’ peaked caps had coloured bands and piping. General officers had red patches, khaki cap bands, and no piping; infantry, khaki cap bands, no piping or patches; artillery, gold crossed cannons on black patches piped red, black cap bands and piping; engineers, silver crossed axes on black patches piped red, black cap bands, no piping. 5th and 6th Lancer Regts wore pennant patches of amaranth-over-blue; horse arty, black-over-red pennants, black cap bands and piping; 1st Armd Car

Detachment (later transferred to III Corps) and the Air Service, black cap bands and no piping, as in I Corps. The cap had a crowned eagle badge bearing ‘KOR II PUS’ on the Amazon shield.

# III Polish Corps in Russia, 4 Dec 1917–14 Apr 1918

Various Polish units in Ukraine formed III Polish Corps on 4 Dec 1917 to protect local Polish communities from Ukrainian nationalists and Ukrainian Central Rada military forces. III Corps, formed by *Generał porucznik* Eugeniusz de Henning-Michaelis, had 3,000 men organized into quick-reaction units. The 2,300-strong Light Bde (*Lekka Brygada*), commanded by *Pułkownik* Juliusz Rommel (a cousin of the ‘Desert Fox’), had rifle, light horse, carabinier (mounted rifle), horse artillery and armoured car units, plus an armoured train. III Corps also included the Litsarki Officers’ Legion and 7th Lancer Regiment.

In Feb 1918 Gen de Henning-Michaelis established his HQ at Starokonstantynów (now Starokonstiantyniv). III Corps engaged Red Army and Ukrainian forces in western Ukraine, but lacked the strength to protect the communities adequately. Nevertheless, in early Apr 1918 de Henning-Michaelis refused the order of his superior, *Generał porucznik* Aleksander Osiński, commanding Polish Forces in Ukraine, to merge his command into II Corps in Bessarabia. On 14 Apr, 7th Lancers were defeated by Ukrainian troops, and on 10 June the Light Bde surrendered to AH forces in the Vinnitsa (now Vinnytsia) region of western Ukraine.

III Corps wore II Corps rank and branch insignia: light horse, blue-over-white pennant, white cap band, no piping; carabiniers, magenta 5-sided patch and cap band, magenta and white piping; rifles (formed 23 May 1918), yellow 5-sided patch, cap band and piping; Litsarki Legion, plain collar, grey cap band, no piping; 7th Lancers, blue-over-amaranth pennant, blue cap band and piping.

*Generał porucznik* Eugeniusz de Henning-Michaelis, a former Russian Army general who from Dec 1917 commanded Polish III Corps in Ukraine in an attempt to defend isolated Polish communities from attacks by Ukrainian nationalists. He wears a superior quality Russian khaki '*French*' tunic with general officers' plain red collar patches, and two M1917 wide gold braid rank chevrons on the left sleeve. He also wears silver staff aiguillettes, and the medal of the Order of St George IV Class for distinguished service on its folded black-and-orange ribbon. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

# POLISH ARMY IN THE EAST, 1918–19

## Polish High Command

Following the disbandment of the 3 Polish corps in Russian service, Polish officers who had served in the Russian Army formed the Military Commission in Moscow in May 1918. The Commission formed the ‘Polish Eastern Army’ (*Wojsko Polskie na Wschodzie*), initially with *General porucznik* Józef Haller as C-in-C, replaced in October 1918 by *General podporucznik* Lucjan Želigowski. In Feb 1919 the Polish Eastern Army became a new II Polish Corps, now officially part of the distant Polish Army in France; it comprised the 4th and 5th Rifle Divs, both of which fought alongside the ‘Whites’ in Russia and Ukraine, since Polish forces were now formal members of the Allied anti-Bolshevik Interventionist alliance.

## 4th Polish Rifle Division, 24 Aug 1918–19 July 1919

In 24 Aug 1918 Gen Mikhail Alexeyev, commanding the ‘White’ Russian Volunteer Army fighting the Red Army in the North Caucasus, formed a ‘Volunteer Army Polish Unit’ in the Kuban from ex-II Corps personnel, comprising rifle and lancer units and a field artillery battery. In Sept 1918 this unit, still only 700 strong, joined 4th Polish Rifle Div, which had transferred in mid-July from Murmansk, where it had formed in June 1918 with an Inf Bde, Lancer and Arty bns, an Eng Co, Air Sqn and a Field Hospital. On 18 Sept 1918, 4th Div transferred to Yekatorinodar (now Krasnodar), providing critical support to the White Volunteer Army in its successful second Kuban campaign (22 June–Nov 1918). On 1 Dec 1918 the 4th Div – well trained, but with only 2,800 men in 3 rifle regts, a cav bn and an air sqn – transferred to Odessa, Ukraine. With French support it expelled Ukrainian UNR forces from the city (13–20 Dec), and fought alongside French and Greek forces against the Red Army at Tiraspol (Romanian Bessarabia) in Feb 1919.

In March 1919 the 3,000-strong 4th Div, with French, Greek and White Russian troops totalling 35,000 men, abandoned Odessa to the Red Army and

retreated to Bessarabia. By June the 4th Div was at Chernivstsi, NW Ukraine, and from 17 June at Stanisławów. It then joined the counter-offensive against the Galician Army (late June–17 July 1919), forcing the Ukrainians out of Polish Galicia into W. Ukraine, and linking up with 6th Polish Rifle Div arrived from France. On 11–13 July the div's 14th Lancer Regt won an important victory against Galician Army troops at Jazłowiec (now Yazlovets, Ukraine). Finally, on 19 July, the div re-formed as the Polish 10th Inf Div, fighting the Red Army in Polish Galicia (now Ukraine). 4th Rifle Division wore II Corps uniforms and insignia.

Soldiers, probably officers, of the Polish 5th Siberian Div posing in front of cattle trucks on the Ufa-Chelyabinsk section of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Jan 1919. Most are wearing fur or fleece-lined Russian greatcoats and gloves. One (second left) has an M1917 PSZ peaked cap with silver chinstrap; others (right & third right) have officers' 'Sam Browne' belts. They have not yet been issued uniforms and insignia of the distant Polish Army in France, to which they now officially belonged. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

# 5th Polish Rifle Division, 1 July 1918–30 Oct 1920

Polish communities were dispersed across the Russian Empire, but particularly in the Volga and Ural regions, and in western and central Siberia. The Tadeusz Kosciuszko Rifle Regt was formed 1 July 1918 (17 Aug, 1st Rifles) in Ufa, Urals Region, from local Polish volunteers. This unit expanded through intensified recruitment in Omsk and Tomsk, Siberia, benefitting from the availability of Polish POWs from German and AH

prison camps following the Armistice. The 5th Polish Rifle Div was formed 25 Jan 1919 in Omsk, western Siberia, then part of the Russian Adm Aleksandr Kolchak's fragile 'White' government dependent on Czechoslovak Legion support. The 3,700-strong 5th or 'Siberian' Div, commanded by Col Kazimierz Rumsza, was, like the 4th Polish Rifle Div, nominally part of II Corps of the Polish Army in France. It comprised 3 rifle regts, cadre and assault bns, lancer and arty regts, and 4 armoured trains, named 'Kraków', 'Poznań', 'Poznań II' (captured May 1919) and 'Warszawa'.

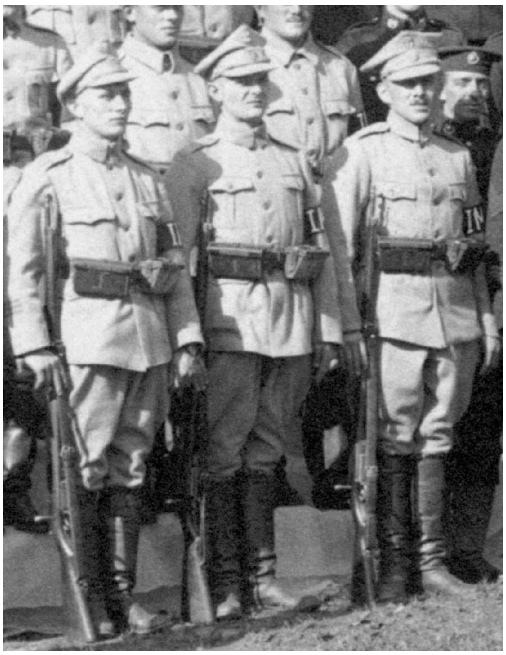
From Jan 1919 the 5th Div guarded the 360-mile Ufa-Chelyabinsk railway line, but in May it was reassigned by the Czechoslovaks to guard the 570-mile Novonikolayevsk (now Novosibirsk)-Klukvienna section of the strategically vital Trans-Siberian Railway, using its armoured trains. When the Red Eastern Army Group launched its final Siberian offensive eastwards along the railway on 14 Oct 1919 the Poles formed the rearguard for Kolchak's troops retreating through snowbound eastern Siberia, fighting actions at Tutal, Litvinovo and Tajga and suffering heavy casualties at the hands of the Red Fifth Army.

When the Czechoslovaks unilaterally ceased operations, the 5th Div decided on 10 Jan 1920 not to surrender at Klukvienna, but to continue retreating. Two groups were formed, one under Col Rumsza heading for Irkutsk, while the main force of 1,000 walked across Mongolia and northern China to Vladivostok, where they boarded a British steamer, reaching Danzig (now Gdańsk) on 1 July 1920. There they formed the Siberian Bde, renamed (20 Dec 1920) Siberian Div, and (30 Oct 1921) the 30th Polessian Inf Division.

Meanwhile, the 920-strong Irkutsk group had reached Shanghai and in March 1920 Harbin, Manchuria, where they formed an Independent Rifle Bn, Officers' Legion, and cavalry and artillery units. They embarked on 15 Apr on a Polish ship, reaching Danzig in July. Meanwhile, the surviving Polish POWs were repatriated to Poland after the Treaty of Riga of 18 March 1921, which concluded the Russo-Polish War 1919–21.

Initially the 5th Rifle Div wore Polish I Corps rank insignia and Blue Army branch insignia on khaki Russian, British and Czechoslovak or French horizon-blue **uniforms.** In early 1919 they were issued uniforms and insignia of the Polish Army in France. The officers' *rogatywka* (with a higher crown for lancers) had a Jagiellonian eagle without an Amazon shield (as also

adopted by the Greater Poland Army, see below) above gold or silver rank bars on an oval. The tunic retained Polish I Corps rank chevrons in a modified system: general officers, 2-1 wide Russian braids; field officers, 3-1 medium gold braids; subaltern officers, 4-1 medium silver braids; enlisted ranks, 4-0 red cloth. Branches were indicated by French kite-shaped collar patches with a single silver *soutache* and silver regt numbers: 1st–3rd Rifles, green patches; 1st Lancers, magenta; 2nd Lancers, white; 5th Arty, red. Breeches and trousers had branch-colour piping.



Officers of the 5th Siberian Div on parade in Vladivostok, July 1920, before embarkation to return to Poland. They wear M1917 horizon-blue *rogatywka* caps with oval rank patches on the band, and officers' 6-button tunics with collar patches without unit numbers, and rank bars on the lower sleeves (the man at left is a *kapitan*). The unidentified armbands on the left sleeves suggest military police, a possibility supported by their carrying M1891 Mosin-Nagant rifles and M1909 pouches. At far right, British Royal Marines in dark-blue service uniform are just visible. (Tchakov Collection)

# Other fronts, July 1917–Dec 1919

In **northern Russia**, on the Murmansk-Archangelsk front of the British intervention forces, a Polish battalion formed from miscellaneous personnel served from July 1917 to December 1918. In Nov 1917 a Polish battalion was formed in **Georgia** from ex-Russian soldiers, being disbanded in July 1918. A 1,737-strong Polish Legion in **Finland** fought with Mannerheim's White army in the Finnish Civil War, Apr 1917–March 1918.

# POLISH FORCES IN THE PRUSSIAN PARTITION

## German Imperial Army, 1914–18

About 40,000 ethnic Poles in the German Empire were conscripted in 6 of the Imperial Army's corps districts covering the Prussian Partition of Poland and E. Germany, personnel being dispersed during World War I to avoid Polish concentrations in particular divisions.

## Greater Poland Army, 27 Dec 1918–28 Aug 1919

In November 1918 Poles living in a Germany confused by Kaiser Wilhelm's abdication on 4 Nov, the dire economic situation, the communist rebellions flaring up across the country, and a German Army disorientated by the Armistice, judged the time ripe to reverse the Prussian Partitions of the 1790s. Posen Province, capital Posen (now Poznań, Poland) seemed the ideal flashpoint. It was 11,200 square miles in area, with a population in 1910 of 2,100,000 of which 61.5 per cent were Polish, and it was surrounded by Polish communities in E. Germany and Congress Poland.

In mid-November, Józef Piłsudski's Polish Military Organization re-formed the wartime Civic Guard (*Straż Obywatelska*) as the People's Guard (*Straż Ludowa*), essentially an armed police force including many battle-hardened soldiers, and on 27 Dec ordered them to seize power by force. The same day *Major* Stanisław Taczak was appointed commander of the new Greater Poland (GP) Army (*Armia Wielkopolska*), reporting to the Supreme National Council. Taczak was replaced on 11 Jan 1919 by *General porucznik* Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, former Polish I Corps commander in Russia.

A *sierżant sztabowy* of Greater Poland Army infantry in field-grey service uniform, 1919. His *rogatywka* cap has amaranth piping, a Greater Poland eagle badge, and, on the left front, a brown braid trefoil with dark-red/white/dark-red rank knots. Tunics showed many variations; this example has a fly front instead of 6 exposed buttons. The high collar has red-and-white national stripes but no unit number, and he has combined a 'mounted' light-grey looped chevron on the forearm with 'dismounted' horizontal stripes above his deep turnback cuffs. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Archive, photo WPLegiony-01)

On 8 Jan 1919 the GP Army divided Posen Province, minus the German-controlled southern, western and northern border districts, into 9 Military Districts (sing: *Dowództwo okręgu wojskowego,* DOW), garrisoned by 25 second-line Territorial Bns (sing: *Bataljon Terytorialny,* BT), supporting 3 first-line Rifle (actually Inf) Divs numbered 1-3, plus 4th GP Div, formed 7 Aug 1919 and renamed 'Pomeranian' 16 Aug, which was too late to see action.

A Rifle Div (*Dywizja Strzelców Wielkopolskich*) comprised 2 numbered bdes each having 2 Rifle Regts, numbered 1–12 for 1–3 Divs; 4th Div's regts were named after the West Prussian towns of Toruń and Starogard, the Pomeranian town of Grudziądz, and the Pomeranian Slav community, the Kashubs. There were 2 arty bdes, each with numbered field and heavy regts; supporting services included 4 numbered sapper (engineer) cos and 4 numbered signals (telegraph) cos of the sapper and sigs battalions. The GP

Cav Bde had Lancer Regts numbered 1–4; there was also an Air Service with sqns numbered 1–4, flying German aircraft. By February 1920 the divs would be fully integrated into the Polish Army and carried numbers within the Polish Army sequence.

Forces were grouped on 18 Jan 1919 into 4 Fronts: Northern Front (2 GP Rifle Div; I–IV & VIII DOW) facing German East Prussia; Western Front (1 GP Rifle Div, 1 GP Cav Bde; V DOW) facing Pomerania and Brandenburg; South-Western Front with Leszno Group (I, IX DOW) facing northern German Silesia; and Southern Front (3 GP Rifle Div; VI, VII DOW) facing German southern Silesia.

The Greater Poland Army was subordinated to Polish Army control from 25 May 1919, but retained a separate organization until full amalgamation on 28 August. The People's Guard was reorganized as the Home Guard (*Obrona Krajowa*) on 30 May 1919.

# The Greater Poland Uprising, 27 Dec 1918–28 June 1919

Hostilities commenced 27 Dec 1918 when the POW and People's Guard, supported by *Sokol*, Boy Scout and other civilian volunteers, fought to take Poznań and occupy towns in east central Greater Poland. On 30 Dec the Poles took Poznań, advanced northwards and north-eastwards and halted a German attack at Zdziechowa near Gniezno. The following day Polish forces advanced into western and south-eastern Greater Poland, and on 1 Jan 1919 into the north-east towards East Prussia, taking Inowrocław on the 6th. German forces in East Prussia counterattacked from the north, capturing Chodzież and Czarnków on 7 Jan (only to lose them the next day), Śiesin in the east and Sieraków in the west on 8 Jan, and Nakło on the 9th. On 10 Jan the Poles advanced into south-west Greater Poland, winning and then losing Sarnowa. On the 11th, German forces took Zbąbszyń in the west, and the Poles counterattacked in the north-east, taking Szubin, Żnin and Łabisyn and approaching the strategic prize of Bydgoszcz. On 13 Jan the Germans recaptured and held Szamocin in the north. On 22 Jan the Polish Northern Front lost Potulice, but Leszno Group took Robaczysko. On the 23rd, Southern Group defended Miejska Górka, with Western Front capturing Babimost and Kargowa on 25 January.

On 28 Jan German forces in Bydgoszcz and Nakło launched another offensive against Northern Group, capturing Szubin and Rynarzewo. Polish-German peace talks began in Berlin on 2 Feb, only to collapse on the 5th. Meanwhile the Polish Northern Group counterattacked on 3 Feb, forcing the Germans back over the River Noteć, taking Kcynia and retaking Rynnarzewo, followed by Szubin on the 4th. On 9 Feb, Polish Western Front stopped a German offensive at Trzciel, while Southern Front halted an attack near Rawicz on the 10th, only for the Germans to recapture Kargowa and Babimost from Western Front on 12 Feb, before being halted near Kopanica.

Greater Poland Army troops occupy a hastily dug slit trench in anticipation of a German attack, spring 1919. They wear German M1916 helmets with white-painted GP eagles as an unofficial field sign. Like the NCO behind him, the officer (foreground) wears a *rogatywka*, and he displays red-and-white collar stripes on his field tunic. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

Since the outbreak of the Russo-Polish War on 5 Jan 1919 the Poles had naturally been distracted, and, under pressure from the Allied powers, which regarded the GP Army as a friendly force, on 16 Feb the terms of the 11 Nov 1918 Armistice were extended to include German and Polish forces in Greater Poland. A ceasefire was ordered, but in fact local hostilities continued until June 1919. On 18 Feb Polish Northern Group fought around Rynarzewo, capturing a German armoured train which they christened ‘Danuta’. There were further skirmishes near Bydgoszcz and Rynarzewo on 6 and 18 June. However, the Treaty of Versailles, signed 28 June 1919, awarded most of Greater Poland to the new Polish Republic, finally neutralizing the German threat.

**Table 4: Greater Poland Army: 27 December 1918–5 March 1920**

**1 GP Rifle Div** (Poznań: 1.1919) / **14 GP Inf Div** (10.12.1919).
- 1 Bde (1.1919) / XXVII Inf Bde (10.12.1919): 1 GP Rifle Regt (19.1.1919) / 55 GP Inf Regt (10.12.1919); 2 GP Rifle Regt (16.3.1919) / 56 GP Inf Regt (7.1.1920).
- II Bde (1.1919) / XXVIII Inf Bde (1.1920): 3 GP Rifle Regt (14.2.1919) / 57 King Carol II of Romania Inf Regt (1.1920); 4 GP Rifle Regt (6.3.1919) / 58 Inf Regt (7.1.1920).
- I Arty Bde (1.1919) / XIV Arty Bde (1.1920): 3 GP Field Arty Regt (28.5.1919) / 14 GP Lt Arty Regt (1.1920); I Bn, 1 GP Heavy Arty Regt (1919) / 14 GP Heavy Arty Regt (1.1920).
- 1/II GP Sapper Bn (23.4.1919) / XIV GP Sapper Bn (16.10.1919); 1/1 Div Sigs Co (1919) / 14 Div Sigs Co (1.1920).

**2 GP Rifle Div** (Wągrowiec: 2.1919) / **15 GP Inf Div** (17.1.1920).
- I Bde (2.1919) / XXIX Inf Bde (1.1920): Kujawski Grenadier Regt (12.1918) / 5 GP Rifle Regt (8.2.1919) / 59 GP Inf Regt (17.1.1920); Leszno Group (6.12.1918) / 6 GP Rifle Regt (6.3.1919) / 60 GP Inf Regt (7.1.1920).
- 4 Bde (2.1919) / XXX Inf Bde (1.1921): Western Group Reserve Regt (6.2.1919) / 7 GP Rifle Regt 15.3.1919) / 61 Inf Regt (7.1.1920); Pleszew & Śrepda Bts, Reserve Bn (10.11.1918) / 8 GP Rifle Regt (3.1919) / 62 Inf Regt (7.1.1920).
- XV Arty Bde (17.1.1920): 1 GP Lt Arty Regt (19.1.1919) / 1 GP Field Arty Regt (21.9.1919) / 15 GP Field Arty Regt (1.1920); 15 GP Heavy Arty Regt (1.1920).
- 2 /I GP Sapper Bn (2.1.1919) / XV GP Sapper Bn (30.1.1920); 2/1 Div Sigs Co (2.1.1919) / 14 Div Sigs Co (1.1920).

**3 GP Rifle Div** (Jarocin: 6.6.1919) / **17 GP Inf Div** (1.2.1920).
- I Bde (6.6.1919) / XXXIII Inf Bde (1.2.1920): 9 GP Rifle Regt (27.4.1919) / 67 Inf Regt (9.2.1920); 1 GP Reserve Rifle Regt 21.1.1919) / 10 GP Rifle Regt (15.3.1919) / 68 Inf Regt (1.2.1920).
- II Bde (6.6.1919) / XXXIV Inf Bde (1.2.1920): Śrem, Jarocin & Koźmin BTs (11.11.1918) / 11 GP Rifle Regt (23.2.1919) / 69 Inf Regt (5.2.1920); Ostrowo, Krotoszyn & Ostrzeszów Bns (12.11.1918) / 12 GP Rifle Regt (6.2.1919) / 70 Inf Regt (10.2.1920).
- III Arty Bde (6.6.1919) / XVII Arty Bde (1.2.1920): 2 GP Field Arty Regt (6.6.1919) / 17 Lt Arty Regt (1.2.1920); III Bn, 1 GP Heavy Arty Regt (6.6.1919) / 17 GP Heavy Arty Regt (1.2.1920).
- 3/I GP Sapper Bn (6.6.1919) / XVII GP Sapper Bn (1.2.1920); 3/1 Div Signal Co (6.6.1919) / 17 Div Signal Co (1.2.1920).

**4 GP Rifle Div** (7.8.1919) / **Pomeranian Rifle Div** (16.8.1919) / **16 Pomeranian Inf Div** (5.3.1920)
- I Bde (7.8.1919) / XXXI Inf Bde (5.3.1920): Toruń Rifle Regt (30.5.1919) / 63 Inf Regt (8.6.1919) / 63 Toruń Inf Regt (3.1920); Grudziądz Rifle Regt (17.8.1919) / 64 Grudziądz Inf Regt (3.1920).
- II Bde (7.8.1919) / XXXII Inf Bde (5.3.1920): Starogard Pomeranian Rifle Regt (7.10.1919) / 65 Starogard Inf Regt (5.3.1920); Kashubian Pomeranian Rifle Regt (10.1919) / 66 Kashubian Inf Regt;
- XVI Arty Bde (5.3.1920): 16 Lt Arty Regt (5.3.1920); 16 Heavy Arty Regt (5.3.1920).
- 4/I GP Sapper Bn (7.8.1919) / XVI GP Sapper Bn (5.3.1920); 4/1 Div Sigs Co (7.8.1919) / 16 Div Sigs Co (5.3.1920).

- **1 GP Cavalry Bde** (Grodzisk: 4.1919) / VII Cavalry Bde (1920): 1 Poznań Guard Mtd Rifle Regt (30.12.1918) / 1 GP Mtd Rifle Regt (26.1.1919) / 1 GP Lancer Regt (29.1.1919) / 15 Lancer Regt (1.1920); Cav Bn (29.12.1918) / Cav Sqn II District (29.1.1919) / 2 GP Lancer Regt (29.5.1919) / 16 GP Lancer Regt (23.1.1920); 3 GP Lancer Regt (6.1.1919) / 17 GP Lancer Regt (8.1919); 5 GP Lancer Regt (24.7.1919) / 4 Nadwiślan Lancer Regt (8.1919) / 18 Pomeranian Lancer Regt (16.1.1920).
- **Air Service.** 1 GP Sqn (13.2.1919) / 12 Sqn (Recce) (3.1920); 2 GP Sqn (14.2.1919) / 13 Sqn (4.1920); 3 GP Sqn (6.3.1919) / 14 Sqn (3.1920); 4 GP Sqn (25.5.1919) / 15 Sqn (3.1920).

- I DOW (Poznań): Poznań Volunteer Bn of Death; 1 Poznań Garrison Regt (Central District).
- II DOW (Września): Gniezno BT, Środa BT, Września BT (Upper East Central District).
- III DOW (Wągrowiec): Kcynia BT, Kowalewo BT, Wągrowiec BT (North Central District).
- IV DOW (Oborniki): Czarnków BT, Pniewy BT (North West District).
- V DOW (Grodzisk): Lwowel BT (Western District).
- VI DOW (Jarocin): Miejska Górka BT, Gostyn BT, Jarocin BT, Jutrosin BT, Koźmin BT, Pleszew BT, Słupia BT, Śrem BT (Lower East Central District).
- VII DOW (Ostrów): Krotosyn BT, Ostrów BT, Ostrzeczów BT, Szczypiorno BT (South-Eastern District).
- VIII DOW (Inowrocław): Inowrocław BT; Strelno BT (North East District).
- IX DOW (Kościan): Kościan BT, Parzęczewo BT, Wielichowo BT (South West District).

# Greater Poland Army uniforms

Initially GP Army personnel wore German uniforms, including the M1916 steel helmet painted field-grey; M1915/1916 peaked field cap and M1907 enlisted peakless field cap (often retaining branch-colour band and black-and-white Prussian cockade); M1910 and M1915/1916 officers' and M1907 and M1915/16 enlisted ranks' field tunics; M1914 officers' breeches and riding boots or enlisted M1914 grey trousers with marching boots or puttees and ankle boots; M1915/16 officers' double-breasted greatcoat; M1908 enlisted single-breasted greatcoat.

The M1919 GP Army uniform, introduced 8 Jan 1919, was field-grey. Officers wore a tall, loose-crowned *rogatywka* cap, with black leather peak

and chinstrap with silver braid slides, and branch-colour piping at the top of the band, vertical seams and crown cross. The badges were a silver Greater Poland eagle, and a rank trefoil off-set on the left side. The 6-button tunic had a high turnover collar; 4 external pleated pockets; pointed or deep turnback square cuffs, with or without buttons; amaranth piping on the collar, shoulder straps, cuffs and pocket flaps. Breeches were worn with black riding boots. The double-breasted officers' greatcoat had a turnover collar, 2 rows of 6 silver buttons, pointed cuffs, and internal waist pockets with slash flaps.

NCOs and men wore the *rogatywka* without piping and with black leather chinstrap slides. The M1919 tunic usually had no pipings and either external or internal waist pockets; trousers were worn with black marching boots, or puttees and ankle boots. The single-breasted greatcoat had 6 buttons.

The 4 lancer regts wore a high-crowned *rogatywka* piped white, with a band in regimental piping colour (**see Table 8, note 3** ). The double-breasted tunic had regimental piping on the collar, pointed (2nd Regt, rounded) shoulder straps, pointed cuffs, front and bottom edges, and the scalloped flaps of internal slash waist pockets; 2-coloured pennant collar patches; 2 rows of 7 plastron buttons, and a button on the back of the sleeve. The back of the tunic had 2 long regimental-colour seams each with 2 waist buttons, and 2 vertical scalloped patches with 3 buttons and regimental piping. The breeches had 2 seam-pipings corresponding to a collar-pennant colour, and the black riding boots had silvered spurs. Silver cap-lines with flounders and tassels were worn around the neck. The dark-blue ceremonial tunic had a piping-coloured collar and pointed cuffs.

The Air Service uniform, introduced 29 March 1919, included a dark-blue peakless cap with yellow piping and a GP eagle, and distinctive collar patches. Flight clothing comprised light-grey fur-lined combinations and flying jackets, with brown leather helmets.

# Rank, branch and unit insignia

**(see also Table 6 and 8 )**

All commissioned ranks wore silver braid chevrons point up above the pointed cuffs of the tunic and greatcoat, and as slides on a wire knot on the cap; this had a trefoil at the top and a button at the bottom, and was worn on the left front of the cap. General officers had a medium-width Russian braid

cuff chevron with a trefoil at the top, above 2-0 narrow braid chevrons, and a silver wire cap trefoil with 3-1 gold braid slides. Field officers had a medium Russian braid looped cuff chevron above 2-0 narrow chevrons, and a silver cap trefoil with 3-1 silver braid slides. Subaltern officers wore a medium Russian braid cuff chevron above 2-0 narrow chevrons, and a silver cap trefoil with 3-1 brown braid slides. NCOs and men of lancers, horse artillery and any other branches wearing pointed cuffs wore light-grey medium-width braid cuff chevrons; infantry and other branches with straight cuffs had horizontal stripes. NCOs had a looped cuff chevron or stripe above 2-0 medium chevrons or stripes, and a brown braid trefoil with slides in dark-red/silver/dark-red, silver over brown, or silver braid. Privates wore 2-0 medium light-grey braid chevrons or stripes, and a brown braid cap trefoil with 2-0 brown braid slides.

Branch insignia was coloured piping on the upper edge of the cap band, the vertical and crown cross-seams of the officers' *rogatywka* cap, and on the tunic front, collar, cuffs and pocket flaps. Branch badges and unit numbers and badges were also worn on the collar, sometimes on a rectangular patch, or together with a vertical stripe of the red-white Polish national colours. The 1st Poznań Garrison Regt, formed 27 Dec 1919, wore a letter 'P', while the 300-strong Volunteer Bn of Death, formed Apr 1919 in Poznań, had a plain collar and a silver metal skull on the cap band; this unit fought against Russia on the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front. Lancers and horse artillery wore 2-coloured regimental pennant badges. General Staff and MP officers wore silver wire aiguillettes on the right shoulder, while MP enlisted ranks wore yellow aiguillettes. Members of key sub-units wore PSZ skills badges introduced Apr 1917 on the left upper sleeves of tunics and greatcoats, officers in gold wire, NCOs and privates in brass on a piping-colour cloth backing.[2]

**2** See MAA 497 *Armies of the Russo-Polish War 1919–21*, p.35

# PLATE COMMENTARIES

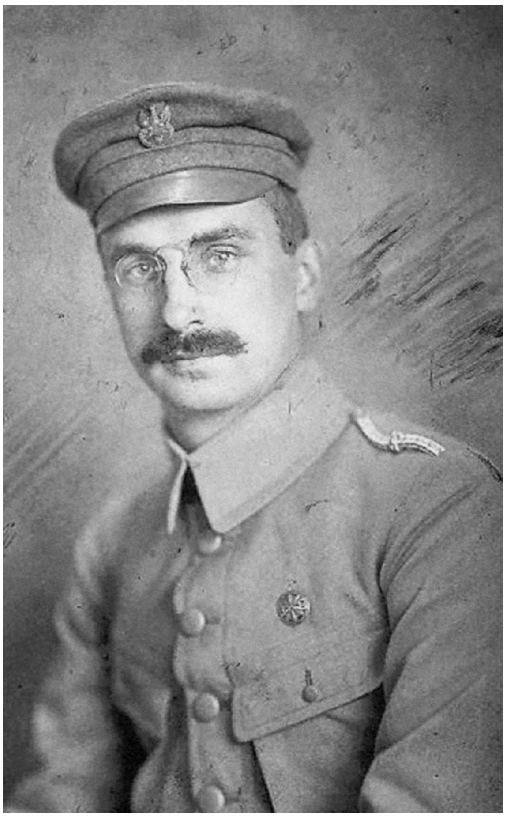
**I BRIGADE POLISH LEGIONS, 1914–15**
1: *Zastępowy*, Lwow Polish Rifle Section, Aug 1914
2: *Podporucznik*, 1st Infantry Regiment, I Brigade; Nowy Korczyn, Sept 1914
3: *Rotmistrz* Władysław Belina-Prażmowski, 1st Lancer Battalion, I Brigade; Konary, May 1915

## A: I BRIGADE POLISH LEGIONS, 1914–15

### A1: *Zastępowy*, Lwow Polish Rifle Section, Aug 1914

This PDS corporal on pre-war manoeuvres wears the M1912 green-grey uniform with *Maciejówka* cap and oval PDS cap badge, collar-patch rank

insignia, and a dark-green NCO whistle lanyard. Armed with the obsolete 8mm M1888 Mannlicher repeating rifle, he wears minimal Austro-Hungarian infantry equipment, comprising M1888 belt, M1908 ammunition pouches, M1912 haversack (‘breadbag’), and a bayonet with belt frog.



Kazimierz Sosnkowski, 1915, as deputy commander of I Bde of the Polish Legions. This friend and long-time political colleague of Piłsudski proved to be a talented and reliable subordinate during the Great War. Here he wears the Austro-Hungarian M1913 pike-grey Rifle uniform; the *Maciejówka* bears the uncrowned eagle-and-shield/‘S’ badge above the central welt around the band. He displays no rank insignia, but has an officer’s silver-and-red left shoulder cords. On his chest is the silver M1913 ‘parasol’ badge of the Riflemen’s Association Officers’ School. (Wikicommons: PD-UK-unknown)

## A2: *Podporucznik*, 1st Infantry Regiment, I Brigade; Nowy Korczyn, Sept 1914

This platoon commander wears the M1913 pike-grey field uniform with I Bde’s M1914 subalterns’ amaranth *wężyk* zigzag collar braid, silver rank stars, and the M1913 ‘parasol’ breast badge for graduates of Piłsudski’s Officers’ School of the Active Struggle Union, formed June 1908. The *Maciejówka* has an uncrowned eagle-and-Amazon-shield badge with ‘S’ for

Rifles. He carries binoculars, an AH M1861 infantry sabre with silver-and-red officers' knot, and a 9mm M1912 Steyr pistol.

**A3: *Rotmistrz* Władysław Belina-Prażmowski, 1st Lancer Battalion, I Brigade; Konary, May 1915**

Captain Belina-Prażmowski typifies the dashing Polish Lancer officer. He wears the M1915 lancer cap with regimental number on the plate, and a pike-grey M1914 tunic and lambskin-lined over-jacket, both with regimental amaranth piping. Like many lancers he wears the Austro-Hungarian 1-year volunteer's silver collar-button. He carries an officer's 8mm M1898 Rast u. Gasser pistol and an M1904 cavalry sword.

**POLISH LEGION BRIGADES, 1915**

1: *Wachmistrz,* 2nd Lancer Battalion, II Brigade; Rokitna, June 1915

2: *Kapral,* I Bde Horse Artillery Battery; Raśną, Aug 1915
3: *Żolnierz,* 2nd Infantry Regiment, II Brigade; Kostiuchnówka, Nov 1915

# B: POLISH LEGION BRIGADES, 1915

**B1: *Wachmistrz,* 2nd Lancer Battalion, II Brigade; Rokitna, June 1915**

This sergeant is wearing II Bde's M1914 shako, pike-grey lancer tunic with M1914 AH rank insignia centrally placed on bright-red scalloped collar-patches; this and the over-jacket are lavishly piped. He carries an M1904 cavalry sword and, as a senior NCO, an 8mm M1907 Roth-Steyr pistol.

**B2: *Kapral,* I Bde Horse Artillery Battery; Raśną, Aug 1915**

This battery performed well during I Bde's successful attack on the Russian 10th Div on 21–24 August. The junior NCO wears the I Bde *rogatywka* cap with the horse artillery version of the M1914 lancer uniform, with black linings, pipings, and scalloped collar patches with AH rank insignia arranged in a triangle. He carries a slung 8mm M1895 cavalry carbine and the M1904 cavalry sword.

**B3: *Żolnierz,* 2nd Infantry Regiment, II Brigade; Kostiuchnówka, Nov 1915**

This ranker of the Carpathian Bde in Ukraine wears the M1915 field-green uniform with the 'Carpathian' field cap and M1915 enlisted ranks' greatcoat. The full infantry marching equipment comprised an M1888 waist belt, M1908 supporting straps and ammunition pouches, M1910 backpack, M1912 breadbag, M1910 spade and frog, and the bayonet for his 8mm M1895 Mannlicher rifle.

**POLISH LEGION BRIGADES, 1916**
1: *Major*, 4th Infantry Regiment, III Brigade; Kostiuchnówka, July 1916
2: *Kapitan*, 3rd Infantry Regiment, Polish Auxiliary Corps; Nowogrodziec, Oct 1916
3: *Ułan*, 2nd Lancer Regiment, Polish Auxiliary Corps; Rarańcza, Feb 1918

# C: POLISH LEGION BRIGADES, 1916

## C1: *Major*, 4th Infantry Regiment, III Brigade; Kostiuchnówka, July 1916

This battalion CO wears the AH M1915 field-green uniform with III Bde's M1915 square-crowned *rogatywka* field cap with eagle-and-shield badge. His infantry-green collar patches display field officers' rank insignia as used in other than I Bde units. He carries a 9mm M1912 Steyr-Hahn pistol and a perspex-inlaid officers' mapcase.

**C2: *Kapitan*, 3rd Infantry Regiment, Polish Auxiliary Corps; Nowogrodziec, Oct 1916**
This dejected PKP officer detained in an internment camp will not see action for a year. He wears M1915 field-green Polish Legion uniform with the now-standard *Maciejówka*, and M1916 collar rank insignia.
**C3: *Ułan*, 2nd Lancer Regiment, Polish Auxiliary Corps; Rarańcza, Feb 1918**
The M1915 field-green uniform includes an AH peakless field cap with the silver-and-red disc badge originally worn by the Bartoszów Sections. The lambskin-lined over-jacket shows a late-war simplified cut.

**POLISH ARMED FORCES, 1917–18**
1: *Porucznik*, Field Artillery; Warsaw, Apr 1917

2: *Plutonowy*, 2nd Infantry Regiment; Warsaw, May 1918
3: *Starszy wachmistrz*, cavalry; Warsaw, May 1918

# D: POLISH ARMED FORCES, 1917–18

**D1: *Porucznik*, Field Artillery; Warsaw, Apr 1917**

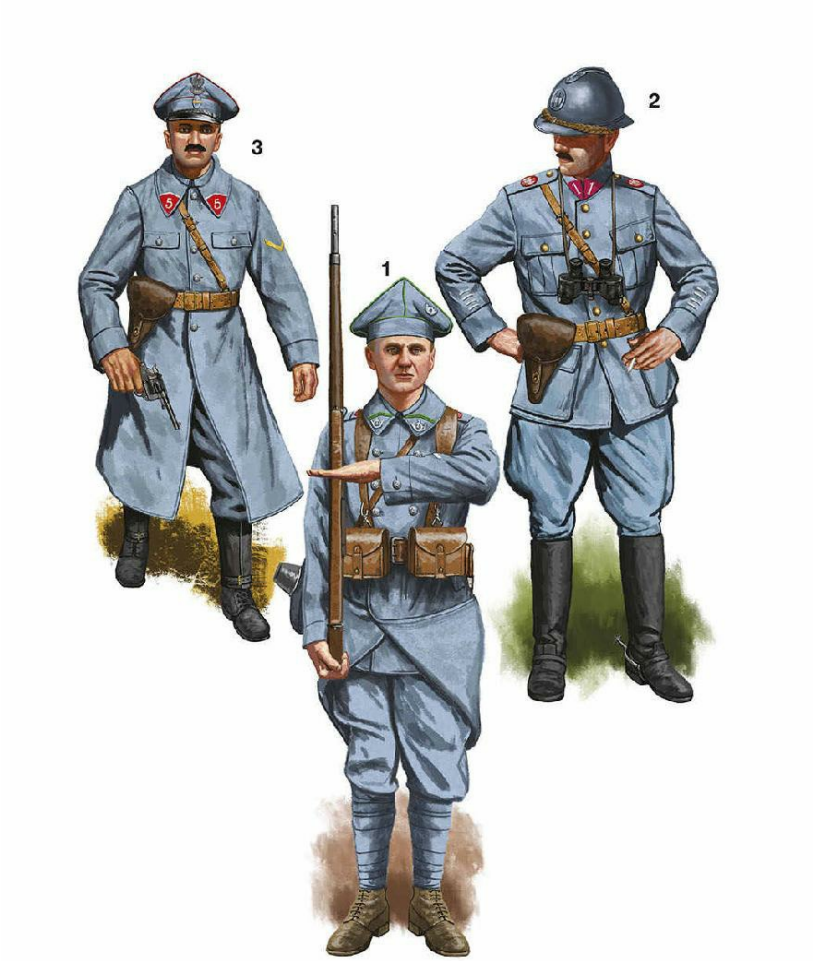
This illustrates the PSZ's M1917 field-grey uniform. The cap displays an officers' rosette and crowned Polish eagle, since Congress Poland was now nominally an independent kingdom. He wears trefoil shoulder cords with the number of his former regiment, 1st Field Artillery, and, as a Polish Legionary since before 10 April 1917, officers' double zigzag piping on the lower and front collar edges.

**D2: *Plutonowy*, 2nd Infantry Regiment; Warsaw, May 1918**

This junior NCO wears the PSZ enlisted ranks' field uniform. The *rogatywka* bears an M1917 crowned Polish eagle on an oval national cockade. He wears the zigzag collar embroidery of a former Polish Legionary. The shoulder straps have amaranth infantry branch-colour piping and regimental number, rank bars, and the company number on the button. The flaming grenade badge on a branch-colour sleeve patch indicates membership of his regiment's 'storm troops' unit. His weapon is the M1895 Mannlicher, for which he carries M1908 ammunition pouches; note his NCOs' bayonet-knot.

**D3: *Starszy wachmistrz*, cavalry; Warsaw, May 1918**

This senior squadron NCO wears the enlisted lancers' M1917 field-grey uniform. The *Maciejówka* has no branch-colour piping or rosette, but the tunic has magenta cavalry piping on the collar, shoulder straps, front, cuffs and pocket flaps. The collar shows Polish Legion narrow silver *wężyk* zigzag piping, and a magenta-and-white pennant patch. The scalloped-ended shoulder straps show a medium-wide silver rank braid, the former regimental number and the squadron button-number. His seniority entitles him to an M1904 officer's sabre, though with an enlisted ranks' knot.




**POLISH ARMY IN FRANCE, 1918–19**
1: *Sierżant*, 1st Rifle Regiment, 1st Rifle Division; Champagne, July 1918
2: *Major*, I Battalion/ 1st Light Horse Regiment, 1st Rifle Division; Sainte Tanche, Aug 1918
3: *Major*, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, 5th Rifle Division; Tutal, Siberia, Oct 1919

# E: POLISH ARMY IN FRANCE, 1918–19

## E1: *Sierżant,* 1st Rifle Regiment, 1st Rifle Division; Champagne, July 1918

This section commander wears the French horizon-blue uniform with Polish distinctions. The peakless *rogatywka* has rifle-green piping, with a bugle-horn in silver for NCOs. The greatcoat has M1917 collar patches with the horn and regimental number also in silver, and (just visible) diagonal silver rank bars above the cuffs. The French M1915 equipment includes waist belt,

support straps, ammunition pouches, water-bottle, and bayonet for his 8mm M1886/93 Lebel rifle.

**E2: *Major*, I Battalion/ 1st Light Horse Regiment, 1st Rifle Division; Sainte Tanche, Aug 1918**

This battalion CO also wears the M1914 horizon-blue field uniform with Polish insignia. The Polish eagle is seen on the plate of the M1915 Adrian helmet and on red ovals on his shoulder straps; he has magenta collar patches with the regimental number, and 4 silver rank bars on his lower sleeves.

**E3: *Major*, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, 5th Rifle Division; Tutal, Siberia, Oct 1919**

Variations from E2 include an M1917 *rogatywka* peaked cap with officers' oval rank badge, a French M1915 single-breasted officer's greatcoat, and distinctive branch colours. His variant cap eagle includes an Amazon shield, the 'WSP' of the Polish Army in Siberia, and the motto 'ZA OJCZVNE I WOLNOSC' ('For Fatherland and Freedom'). He wears a single gold braid rank chevron on his left upper sleeve only.

**POLISH ARMY IN RUSSIA, 1915–18**
1: *Mladshiy Unterofitser,* Rifle Company, I Polish Legion; Novo Alexandriya, Jan 1915
2: *Praporshchik,* IV Rifle Battalion, Polish Rifle Brigade; Novogrudok, March 1916
3: *General porucznik* Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, I Corps; Bobruisk, Jan 1918

# F: POLISH ARMY IN RUSSIA, 1915–18

## F1: *Mladshiy Unterofitser,* Rifle Company, I Polish Legion; Novo Alexandriya, Jan 1915

This infantry section commander wears the Russian winter service uniform on parade. The M1910 lambswool cap has a crowned Polish eagle without Amazon shield, superimposed on a Russian enlisted ranks' orange-and-black Tsarist cockade. The greyish-brown M1911 greatcoat has infantry-red service shoulder straps with 2 white rank bars, a yellow Legion monogram and

battalion number, and the white-orange-black cord edging of a 1-year volunteer. He carries a 7.62mm M1891 Moisin-Nagant rifle and standard infantry equipment.

## Table 5: Rank insignia of Polish Legions and Auxiliary Corps: October 1914–15 February 1918

| Infantry, I Brigade Polish Legions 10.1914–20.9.1916 Insignia on pike-grey / field-green collars | 1 Lancer Regiment, Polish Legions 10.1914–2.7.1916 Officers' insignia on scalloped collar-patches; Other Ranks on shoulder straps | Other units in the Polish Legions 10.1914–20.9.1916 Insignia on branch-colour collar-patches | Polish Auxiliary Corps 20.9.1916–19.2.1918 Insignia on field-green collar-patches / ceremonial shoulder straps, both piped in branch-colour | (Equivalent ranks, British Army 1939–45) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Field officers:** | | | | |
| **Pułkownik** (1) *3 horizontal gold stars on wide silver zigzag braid.* | – | **Pułkownik** (1) *3 horizontal gold stars on wide silver braid patch edging* | **Pułkownik** *3 horizontal gold stars above zigzag braid on wide silver braid edging / silver cord edging and centre-stripe on silver braid strap* | *Colonel* |
| **Podpułkownik** (1) *2 horizontal gold stars on wide silver zigzag braid.* | – | **Podpułkownik** (1) *2 horizontal gold stars on wide silver braid patch edging* | **Podpułkownik** *2 horizontal gold stars above zigzag braid on wide silver braid edging / silver cord edging on silver braid strap* | *Lieut. Colonel* |
| **Major** (1) *1 horizontal gold star on wide silver zigzag braid.* | – | **Major** (1) *1 gold star on wide silver braid patch edging* | **Major** *1 gold star and zigzag braid above wide silver braid edging / silver cord centre-stripe on silver braid strap* | *Major* |
| **Subaltern officers:** | | | | |
| **Kapitan** *3 horizontal silver stars above narrow red zigzag* | **Rotmistrz** *3 horizontal silver stars on red patch* | **Kapitan** (2) *3 horizontal silver stars* | **Kapitan** (2) *3 horizontal silver stars above zigzag braid / silver cord edging and centre-stripe on strap* | Captain |
| **Porucznik** *2 horizontal silver stars above narrow red zigzag* | **Porucznik** *2 horizontal silver stars on red patch* | **Porucznik** *2 horizontal silver stars* | **Porucznik** *2 horizontal silver stars above zigzag braid / silver cord edging on strap* | Lieut. |
| **Podporucznik** *1 horizontal silver star above narrow red zigzag* | **Podporucznik** *1 horizontal silver star on red patch* | **Podporucznik** *1 silver star* | **Podporucznik** *1 silver star above zigzag braid / silver cord centre-stripe on strap* | 2/Lieut. |
| **Non-commissioned officers:** | | | | |
| – | **Starszy wachmistrz** *pike-grey strap piped red, red inner edging* | **Chorąży** *1 silver star above medium silver braid patch edging* | **Chorąży** *Silver zigzag braid / silver double thin zigzag centre-braids on strap* | WO2 (CSM) |
| **Sierżant** *3 horizontal red braid bars* | **Wachmistrz** *pike-grey strap piped red, 3 red bars* | **Sierżant** (3) *3 horizontal white bone stars above medium silver braid patch edging* | **Sierżant** (3) *3 horizontal silver stars above 2 thin zigzag braids / thick silver zigzag braid on strap* | Serjeant |
| – | – | **Plutonowy** *3 horizontal white bone stars* | **Plutonowy** *3 horizontal silver stars above thin zigzag braid / 3 thin diagonal bars on strap* | Lance Serjeant |
| **Kapral** *2 horizontal red braid bars* | **Kapral** *pike-grey strap piped red, 2 red bars* | **Kapral** *3 horizontal white bone stars* | **Kapral** *2 horizontal silver stars above thin zigzag braid / 2 thin diagonal bars on strap* | Corporal |
| **Men** | | | | |
| **Starszy żołnierz** *1 horizontal red braid bar* | **Starszy ułan** *pike-grey strap piped red, 1 red bar* | **Starszy żołnierz** (4) *1 white bone star* | **Starszy żołnierz** (5) **si***lver star above thin zigzag braid / 1 thin diagonal bar on strap* | Lance Corporal |
| **Żołnierz** *plain collar* | **Ułan** *pike-grey strap piped red* | **Żołnierz** (5) *plain patch* | **Żołnierz** (6) *Thin zigzag braid / plain strap* | Private |

(1) Rank insignia introduced September 1915. (2) Rotmistrz – Cavalry. (3) Wachmistrz – Cavalry. (4) Starszy ułan – Cavalry. (5) Ułan – Cavalry.

## Table 6: Rank insignia of Polish Independent Forces: 10 April 1917–20 December 1920

| **Polish Armed Forces 10.4.1917–11.11.1918** *Insignia on field-grey cord trefoil / cloth shoulder straps with branch-colour underlay / piping* | **Polish Army in France 4.6.1917–1.9.1919** *Button-colour braid bars on horizon-blue cuffs* | **Polish Forces in Russia 3.12.1917–20.12.1920** *Chevrons point down on left upper sleeve* | **Greater Poland Army 2.1.1919–13.11.1919** *Chevrons point up on lower sleeves* | **(Equivalent ranks, British Army 1939–45)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **General officers:** | | | | |
| **Generał broni** (1) *3 vertical 5-pointed gold stars above gold crown on triple silver plaited bouillon cord* | – | **Generał broni** (1) *3 wide gold Russian braid chevrons* | **Generał broni** *Medium silver Russian braid trefoil chevron above 2 thin silver wire chevrons* | General |
| **Generał porucznik** (1) *2 vertical gold stars above gold crown on triple silver plaited bouillon cord* | **Generał dywizji** *3 silver stars in a triangle above a red cuff with 2 silver zigzag chevrons* | **Generał porucznik** *2 wide gold Russian braid chevrons* | **Generał porucznik** *Medium silver Russian braid trefoil chevron above 1 thin silver wire chevron* | Lieut. General |
| **Generał major** *1 gold star above gold crown on triple silver plaited bouillon cord* | **Generał brygady** *2 horizontal silver stars above a red cuff with 1 silver zigzag chevron* | **Generał podporucznik** *1 wide gold Russian braid chevron* | **Generał podporucznik** *Medium silver Russian braid trefoil chevron* | Major General |
| **Field officers:** | | | | |
| **Pułkownik** *3 vertical gold stars on triple silver plaited cord* | **Pułkownik** *5 button-colour bars* | **Pułkownik** *3 medium gold braid chevrons* | **Pułkownik** *Medium silver Russian braid looped chevron above 2 thin silver wire chevrons* | Colonel |
| **Podpułkownik** *2 vertical gold stars on triple silver plaited cord* | **Podpułkownik** *5 bars, 3rd in reversed button-colour, others button-colour* | **Podpułkownik** *2 medium gold braid chevrons* | **Podpułkownik** *Medium silver Russian braid looped chevron above 1 thin silver wire chevron* | Lieut. Colonel |
| **Major** *1 gold star on triple silver plaited cord* | **Major** *4 button-colour bars* | – | **Mayor** *Medium silver Russian braid looped chevron* | Major |
| **Subaltern officers:** | | | | |
| **Kapitan** (2) *3 vertical gold stars on flat silver cord* | **Kapitan** *3 button-colour bars* | **Kapitan** (2) *1 medium gold above 3 silver braid chevrons* | **Kapitan** (2) *Medium silver Russian braid chevron above 2 thin silver wire chevrons* | Captain |
| – | – | **Podkapitan** (17) *4 medium silver braid chevrons* | – | – |
| **Porucznik** *2 vertical gold stars on flat silver cord* | **Porucznik** *2 button-colour bars* | **Porucznik** *3 medium silver braid chevrons* | **Porucznik** *Medium silver Russian braid chevron above 1 thin silver wire chevron* | Lieut. |
| **Podporucznik** *1 vertical gold star on flat silver cord* | **Podporucznik** *1 button-colour bar* | **Podporucznik** (18) *2 medium silver braid chevrons* | **Podporucznik** *Medium silver Russian braid chevron* | 2/Lieut. |
| – | **Aspirant** *1 button-colour loop, red threads* | **Chorąży** *1 medium silver braid chevron* | – | Junior 2/Lieut. |
| **Non-commissioned officers:** | | | | |
| **Chorąży** *Flat silver cord* | **Adiutant** *1 button-colour chevron point up, red thread* | – | – | WO2 (CSM) |
| **Starszy sierżant** (3, 4) *Medium silver braid edging on strap* | **Sierżant major** *2 button-colour diagonal bars* | – | **Sierżant sztabowy** (21, 22) *Medium light-grey braid looped chevron/stripe above 2 light-grey braid chevrons/ stripes* | Colour Serjeant |

**Table 6 (*cont*): Rank insignia of Polish Independent Forces: 10 April 1917–20 December 1920**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sierżant** (5, 6)<br>*Thin silver braid edging on strap* | **Sierżant**<br>*1 button-colour diagonal bar* | **Sierżant** (5)<br>*4 thin branch-colour (1918: red) cloth chevrons* | **Sierżant** (5) (6)<br>*Medium light-grey braid looped chevron/stripe above 1 light-grey braid chevron/stripe* | Serjeant |
| **Plutonowy** (7)<br>*3 thin silver braid horizontal stripes on strap* | – | **Plutonowy** (19)<br>*3 thin branch-colour (1918: red) cloth chevrons* | **Plutonowy**<br>*Medium light-grey braid looped chevron/stripe* | Lance Serjeant |
| **Kapral** (8)<br>*2 thin silver braid horizontal stripes on strap* | **Kapral**<br>*2 cloth branch-colour diagonal bars* | **Młodszy podoficer** (20)<br>*2 thin branch-colour (1918: red) cloth chevrons* | **Kapral**<br>*2 light-grey braid chevrons/ stripes* | Corporal |
| **Men** | | | | |
| **Starszy żołnierz** (9,10)<br>*1 thin silver braid horizontal stripe on strap* | **Żołnierz I klasy** (13-4)<br>*1 cloth branch-colour diagonal bar* | **Kapral**<br>*1 thin branch-colour (1918: red) cloth chevron* | **Starszy strzelec** (9, 10, 24)<br>*1 light-grey braid chevron/ stripe* | Lance Corporal |
| **Żołnierz** (11,12)<br>*plain collar* | **Żołnierz II klasy** (15-6)<br>*No cuff insignia* | **Żołnierz** (11,12)<br>*1 thin branch-colour cloth chevron point down (1918: no insignia)* | **Strzelec** (11-2, 25)<br>*No cuff insignia* | Private |

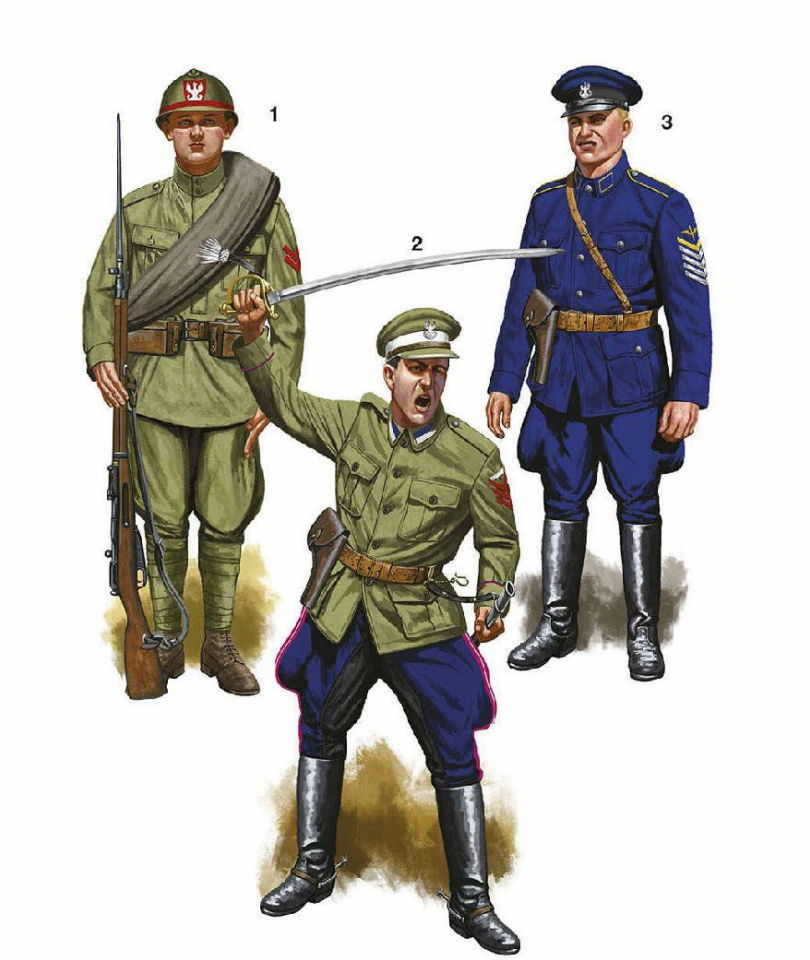
(1) Rank approved but never held. (2) Rotmistrz – Cavalry. (3) Starszy wachmistrz – Cavalry. (4) Starszy ogniomistrz - Artillery. (5) Wachmistrz – Cavalry. (6) Ogniomistrz – Artillery. (7) Starszy żandarm – Military Police. (8) Żandarm – Military Police. (9) Starszy ułan – Cavalry. (10) Bombardier – Artillery. (11) Ułan – Cavalry. (12) Kanonier – Artillery. (13) Szwoleżer I klasy – Cavalry. (14) Kanonier I klasy – Artillery. (15) Szwoleżer II klasy – Cavalry. (16) Kanonier II klasy – Artillery. (17) Podrotmistrz – Cavalry. (18) Kornet – Cavalry. (19) Infantry. Starszy podoficer – other branches. (20) Zastępca – Cavalry. (21) Wachmistrz sztabowy – Cavalry. (22) Ogniomistrz sztabowy – Artillery. (23) Starszy kanonier – Artillery. (24) Starszy saper – Engineers. (25). Saper – Engineers.

## F2: *Praporshchik*, IV Rifle Battalion, Polish Rifle Brigade; Novogrudok, March 1916

This junior officer wears Russian M1907 service uniform without Polish distinctions. The peaked cap shows the Tsarist officers' cockade; the field shirt has silver service shoulder straps with red pipings and centre-stripe, and a gold battalion number for Rifles. He wears infantry officers' brown leather field equipment including a holstered 7.62mm M1895 Nagant pistol and imported German Zeiß binoculars.

## F3: *General porucznik* Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, I Corps; Bobruisk, Jan 1918

One of Poland's most distinguished generals is illustrated wearing the M1917 I Corps service uniform with the high-crowned lancer cap also worn by general officers, and a closed-collar '*French*' tunic. Branch colour (red for generals) is shown on the cap band and piping, 'spearhead' collar patches, tunic lining and piping, and piping on the traditional Russin royal-blue *sharovari* breeches. His squared-off rank chevrons are in gold 'Russian braid', and the Polish eagle badge worn in Russia has a more angular Amazon shield.




**POLISH ARMY IN RUSSIA, 1918–19**
1: *Młodszy podoficer*, 14th Rifle Regiment, 4th Rifle Division, II Corps; Kaniów, May 1918
2: *Podchorąży*, Light Horse Regiment, Light Brigade, III Corps; Vinnitsa, June 1918
3: *Kapitan*, 4th Rifle Division Air Squadron; Tiraspol, February 1919

# G: POLISH ARMY IN RUSSIA, 1918–19

## G1: *Młodszy podoficer*, 14th Rifle Regiment, 4th Rifle Division, II Corps; Kaniów, May 1918

This junior NCO wears Russian clothing and equipment, including a field shirt with a 2-button standing collar. The Adrian helmet shows a Polish Army in Russia shield and amaranth-coloured band. The infantry wore no collar patches, but he displays M1918 amaranth rank chevrons. Note the greatcoat roll secured over his shoulder.

**G2: *Podchorąży*, Light Horse Regiment, Light Brigade, III Corps; Vinnitsa, June 1918**
This cavalry officer cadet wears officer's uniform with NCO chevrons. His M1917 'English' peaked cap has silver peak-edging, a white cavalry band, and a 'Russian-Polish' eagle-and-shield without an inscription (unlike E3). His '*French*' tunic has blue/white collar pennants, and M1918 amaranth NCO chevrons below a silver braid cadet bar. His reinforced riding breeches have white cavalry piping and magenta stripes. He carries a 7.62mm M1895 Nagant pistol and a Russian M1909 officers' sword.
**G3: *Kapitan*, 4th Rifle Division Air Squadron; Tiraspol, February 1919**
This squadron commander wears the royal-blue Imperial Russian Air Service uniform with a black cap band and 'Russian-Polish' eagle-and-shield. His tunic has collar-patch and shoulder-strap piping in pale yellow, the post-war Polish Air Force's branch colour. The Russian-style winged propeller worn above M1918 chevrons also identifies his branch.

**GREATER POLAND ARMY, 1919**
1: *General porucznik* Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki; Poznań, Jan 1919
2: *Plutonowy,* 1st Rifle Regiment, 1st Rifle Division; Poznań, Jan 1919
3: *Wachmistrz sztabowy,* 1st Lancer Regiment; Poznań, Jan 1919

# H: GREATER POLAND ARMY, 1919

## H1: *General porucznik* Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki; Poznań, Jan 1919

This redoubtable general (see F3) is now wearing the M1919 field-grey Greater Poland Army uniform. His *rogatywka* has the M1919 eagle and the distinctive trefoil rank insignia. His tunic collar shows the red-and-white Polish national colours. (On 3 July 1919 Dowbor-Muśnicki would adopt the eagle on light-blue collar patches of the Toruń Rifle Regt, to show solidarity with the Pomeranian Poles.) As a general officer he wears bright-red piping

on the cap, tunic (including pocket flaps) and breeches. He wears the I Corps commemorative badge on his right upper breast, and carries a 9mm German P08 ‘Luger’ pistol.

**H2: *Plutonowy*, 1st Rifle Regiment, 1st Rifle Division; Poznań, Jan 1919**

This infantry section commander wears a German uniform and equipment, differenced by a white-and-red armband and by the hand-painted GP eagle on his M1916 helmet. His modified M1915 enlisted ranks’ field tunic has a field-grey collar with red-and-white Polish stripes and the regimental number, pointed shoulder straps, and sewn-in turnback cuffs with light-grey braid rank insignia. He wears black leather German equipment retaining the Prussian Army buckle plate, and carries the 7.92mm M1898 infantry rifle and bayonet.

**H3: *Wachmistrz sztabowy*, 1st Lancer Regiment; Poznań, Jan 1919**

This senior NCO acting as an officer wears the M1919 field-grey lancer uniform; note the Greater Poland cap badge and trefoil, regimental amaranth cap band, white piping, and light-grey braid chevrons. He carries a 7.63mm M1896 Mauser C96 pistol, and an officer’s belt and crossbrace.

This portrait of a Polish Legions infantry private from II or III Bde shows the M1915 field-green field uniform to advantage. He wears the Polish M1915 field cap with M1914 eagle-and-shield, and the field tunic with Austro-Hungarian ‘swallow-tailed’ pocket flaps, and green collar patches scalloped at the rear edge. (Tchakov Collection)

## Table 7: Branch insignia of the Polish Forces: October 1914–11 November 1918

| Branch | Polish Legions 10.1914–20.9.1916 *cloth collar patches* | Polish Auxiliary Corps 20.9.1916–11.11.1918 *Collar & shoulder-strap cloth piping* | Polish Armed Forces 10.4.1917–11.11.1918 *Cloth shoulder-strap underlay & piping* |
|---|---|---|---|
| General officers | – | – | Magenta, piped white |
| General Staff officers | – | – | Magenta |
| Infantry | regimental (1) | Amaranth red | Amaranth |
| Cavalry (Lancers) | regimental (2) | Bright red | Magenta |
| Cavalry (Mounted Rifles) | Blue | – | – |
| Artillery | Black | Black | Black |
| Horse Artillery | Black | Black | Black |
| Engineers | Bright red | Bright red | Bright red |
| Signals | Bright red | Blue | Blue |
| Supply Train | – | Brown | Brown |
| Administration officers | – | Dark blue | Dark blue |
| Medical officers | White | Black | Black velvet |
| Medical orderlies | White | White | White |
| Veterinary Corps | – | Brown | Brownish green |
| Military Police | Light yellow | Light yellow | Light yellow |
| Chaplains | – | Purple | Purple |
| Field Post | – | Orange | Orange |

(1) 1, 5 & 7 Inf Regts (I Bde): amaranth red zigzag collar braid; 2, 3 Inf Regts (II Bde) & 4, 6 Inf Regts (III Bde): green.
(2) 1 Lancer Regt (I Bde): amaranth; 2 Lancer Regt (II Bde): bright red.

## Table 8: Branch insignia of the Polish Armed Forces: 4 June 1917–13 November 1919

| Branch | Polish Army in France 4.6.1917–1.9.1919 *collar patch; unit badge; double soutache (button-colour)* | Polish Rifle Division in Russia 1.1917–24.7.1917 *shoulder straps : piping, centre-stripes, unit number* | I Polish Corps in Russia 3.12.1917–21.5.1918 *'Spearhead' collar patches with piping and silver insignia* | Greater Poland Army 2.1.1919 – 13 11.1919 *Tunic piping; silver collar-patch badge; unit insignia* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| General officers | No patch, badge, or edging (silver) | Red, red zigzag | Red patch; no patch insignia | Red; red-white stripe; eagle on red patch |
| General Staff officers | Crimson; zigzag; no edging (silver) | Red, black | No patch; black collar piped white | Crimson; eagle on crimson |
| Infantry/ Rifle Regts | Horizon blue; 1–15, 19–21 horn; green (silver) | Regt (1), dark blue, 1–4 | Khaki patch; Div and Reserve Bde piping; Nos 1–12 | Amaranth ; red-white stripe, 1–12 + 6 named units (2) |
| Lancer / Light Horse Regts/ Bns | Magenta; 1, 3, 4; white (silver) | Magenta, blue, I, II | Regt pennant, coloured cap band | Regt piping; Regt pennant (3) |
| Armoured Regt | Red; 1; light blue (gold) (arm-badge) | – | Black collar | – |
| Armoured Trains | – | – | Black collar | Black; red-white stripe, crossed cannons |
| Field Artillery Rgts | Red; 1–3, 6, 7; light blue (gold) | – | Black patch piped red; piping, gold cannons over 1–2 | Black; red-white stripe, 1–3 above cannons |
| Heavy Artillery Bns | – | – | Gold grenade on cannons on black rectangle piped red | Black; red-white stripe, gold cannons |
| Horse Artillery Bns | – | – | Black-over-red pennant piped red, gold cannons over 1. | Black; black over light-red pennant |
| Engineer Cos | Black; 1–3, 6, 7; red (gold) | Red, red, spade & pickaxe | Khaki patch piped black, | Red; red-white stripe, |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | crossed axes. | spade, axe, pick |
| Signal Cos | Black; 1–3, 6, 7; red (gold) (arm-badge) | – | Khaki patch piped yellow, lightning flashes; | Red; red-white stripe; lightning flashes |
| Supply Train Columns | Green; red 1–4; white (silver) | – | – | Brown; red-white stripe, brown patch |
| Medical officers | Crimson; white caduceus; white (gold) | Dark blue, snake | Khaki patch piped blue, snake | Dark blue; aesculapius staff on dark blue patch. |
| Medical companies | Crimson; white 1–6; blue (gold) | Dark blue, snake | Khaki patch piped blue, snake | No piping; red cross on white patch |
| Veterinary Corps | – | – | – | – |
| Military Police platoons | Black; silver flaming grenade; white (silver) | – | Red over yellow pennant, eagle | Yellow; eagle with outstretched wings on yellow patch |
| Chaplains | – | Ecclesiastical robes | Ecclesiastical robes | Violet, Cross on violet |
| Admin | Grey; no badge; white (silver) | – | Khaki patch piped blue | Crimson; OA on crimson patch |
| Field Post | – | – | Khaki patch piped red, lightning flashes | – |
| Air Service Sqns | No patch; winged star; no piping (silver) | – | Dark-blue collar, silver winged propeller arm-badge. Red chevrons | Yellow; Wing on blue patch piped yellow |

(1) 1st Rifles – red; 2nd Rifles – white; 3rd Rifles – yellow; 4th Rifles – dark blue.
(2) Toruń Regt – silver crowned eagle with outstretched wings holding a scimitar, on blue patch; Grudziądz Regt– red crowned eagle with outstretched wings holding a scimitar; Starogard Regt – Jagiellonian eagle; Kashubian Regt – crowned Pomeranian griffin; 1st Poznań Garrison Regt – letter 'P'; Poznań Volunteer Bn of Death – silver skull on cap band.
(3) 1st Lancers – red / white (red piping); 2nd Lancers – white, red centre-stripe (white piping); 3rd Lancers – white / golden yellow (golden yellow piping); 4th Lancers – blue /white (white piping).

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**NIGEL THOMAS PHD** is an accomplished linguist and military historian, formerly at Northumbria University, now a freelance military author, translator and military uniform consultant. His interests are 20th-century military and civil uniformed organizations, with a special interest in Germany and Central and Eastern Europe. He was awarded a PhD on the Eastern enlargement of NATO.

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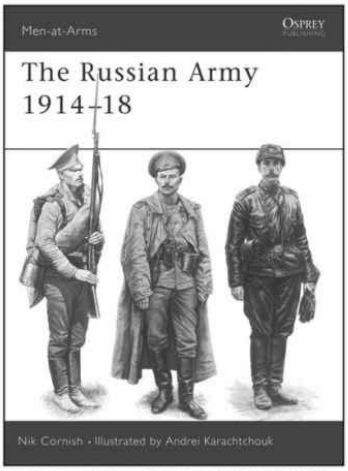


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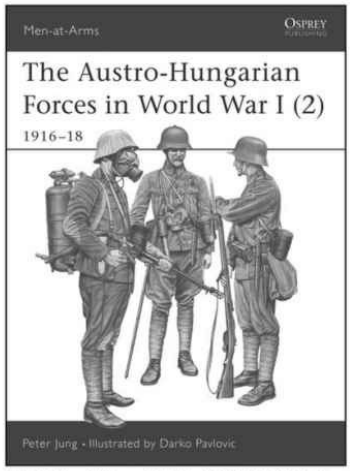


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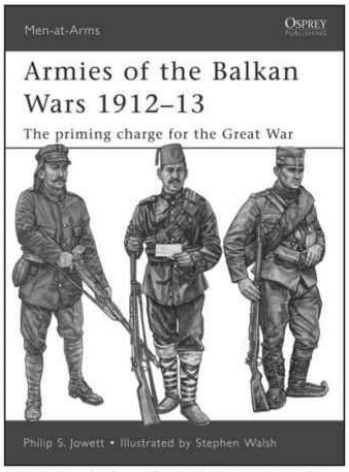
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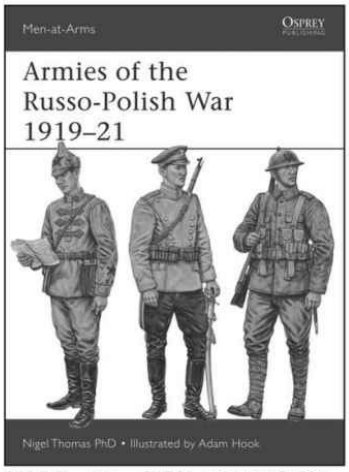


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